The Classic Comedy Magazine

COMIQUE

Volume II, Number 1

Winter 2025-26

THE CLASSIC COMEDY MAGAZINE

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ON THE COVER: A colorized B&W portrait shot of Lloyd Hamilton taken in 1931 by Universal. This issue features Richard M. Roberts' massive article on Lloyd Hamilton's life and work, and prominently features several photographs of his lost films in the hope that more of his work may be recovered across the world.

THE CLASSIC COMEDY MAGAZINE

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Comique is proudly published, at increasingly irregular intervals, in Picayune, Mississippi, and points north.

FROM THE FOUNDERS

Welcome to the Winter 2025 issue of *Comique Magazine*!

Following a three-year hiatus (see David's comments below for details) The Comique Group is back with another volume guaranteed to amuse, astound, and illuminate — tho not necessarily in that order:

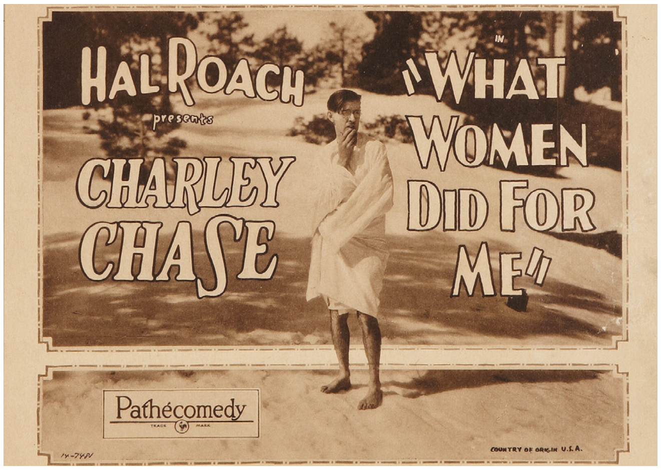
Our cover story: Historian Richard M. Roberts unveils his epic biography and updated filmography for Silent Comedy's Poor Soul — Lloyd Hamilton.

Author par excellence Edward Watz has graciously pulled double duty for this issue (taking a break from preparation of his much-anticipated Buster Keaton book) to answer readers' questions about controversial film collector and distributor Raymond Rohauer, and discuss the time when Bud Abbott was funnier than Lou Costello!

Historian Lea Stans examines the life and films of The Forgotten Queen of Slapstick, Louise Fazenda.

Author Joanna Rapf waxes lyrical about Polly Moran, A Bassoon in Hollywood's Symphony of Sweet Tuned Violins.

Our historian friend Olga Egorova pulls back the Iron Curtain to reveal previously undocumented details about the films of Buster Keaton in the USSR.



This issue also includes a 1962 chat with comic actor Vernon Dent, archival gems from Minta Durfee Arbuckle, a revealing missive from Stan Laurel, Ted Healy opining on all things stooge, The Comique Cutie centerfold (for which we must apologize in advance…) and more!

Good things truly do come to those who wait.

Yours for fun,

Paul E. Gierucki

Well, we thought the sixteen-month gap between the first two issues of *Comique* (henceforth known as *Comique*, Volume I) was a long time. Little did we know that over three years would pass before we'd get this third issue (which starts Volume II) out the door.

So, what the heck happened? First of all, a whole series of other projects — including a two-year struggle to reconstruct a bunch of 1927 Charley Chase films for Blu-ray release — tied up Paul constantly, and kept these non-profit efforts on the back-burner.

Another issue has been my personal health. Over the last few years, I have been suffering from Parkinson's Syndrome (as if being a half-blind, nearsighted, OCD, Aspie was not enough to hamper my production work). As the Parkinson's has advanced, I've mostly lost the use of my right hand due to the "shakes," which has reduced my productivity even further. Frankly, it seemed like Comique might be done for.

Enter Nicolas Ciccone. Nic has become my "hands," learning in a short time how to master art and layout programs in order to help fill the production void. Nic is a workaholic saint with the patience of Job. Nic is also an egotistical, prima donna perfectionist. In short, he has been an excellent fit with this group.

Anyway, this issue of *Comique* is several pages longer than the last one, which confirms that we're all still very crazy. If we weren't, how could we make impossible things happen?

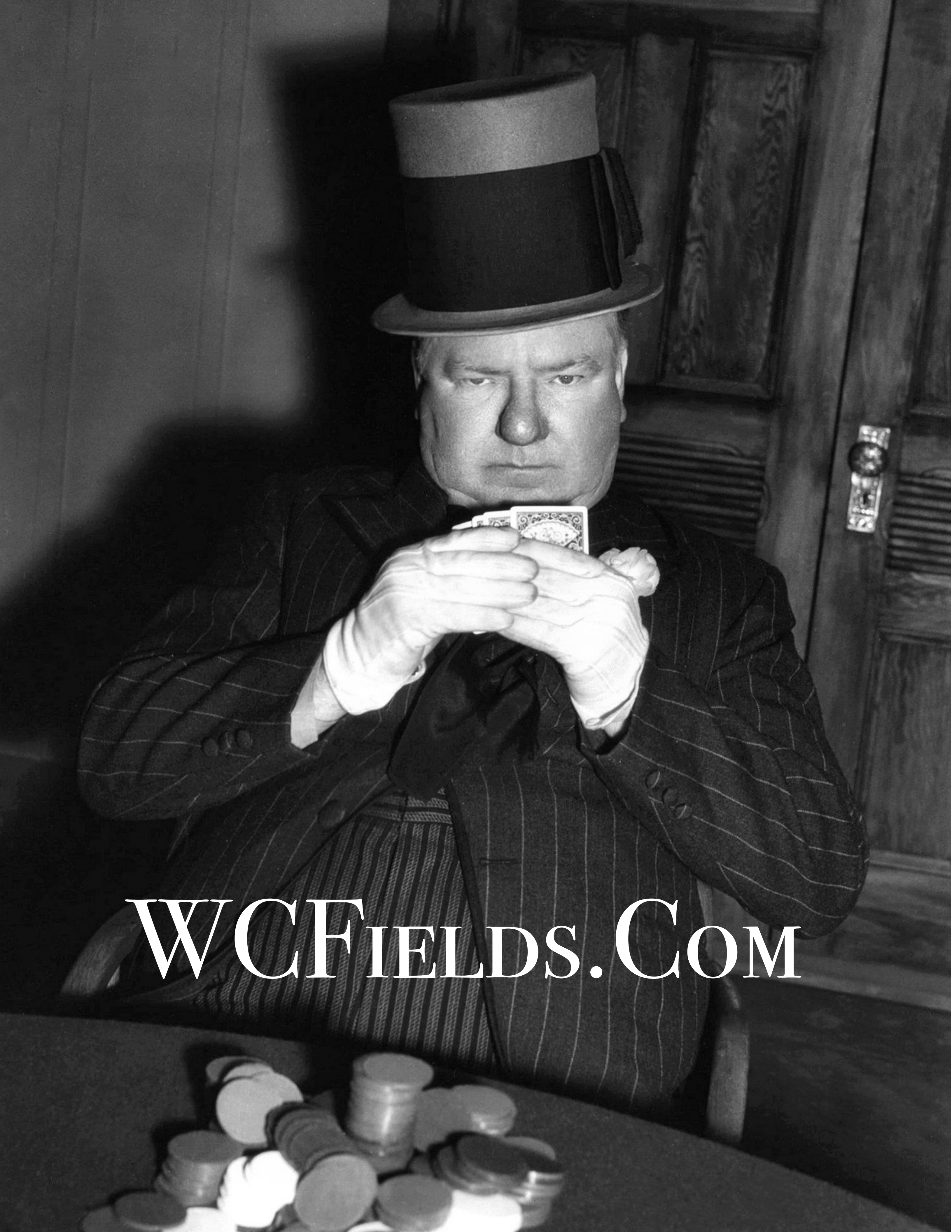
Enjoy,

David B. Pearson

Having a Bad Day?

Ever sometimes get a feeling of doom?
Does the whole world seem to be crashing down on your neck?
Let Buster Keaton save the day!

For more information about Buster Keaton and the International Buster Keaton Society Inc., a 501(c)(3) non- profit organization, come over and visit us at www.busterkeaton.org or find us on Facebook (facebook.com/busterkeatonsociety) and Twitter (@busterkeatonsoc).


WCFields.Com

COMIQUE MAGAZINE
presents

Raymond Rohauer

Redux

By Edward Watz

COMIQUE

"I did a very deceptive thing… and I felt I was justified in doing it."

— Raymond Rohauer
on Talk Radio, 1970

"Being the film pirate, he was afraid somebody else would do the same thing to him."

— Ben Barenholtz,
owner of The Elgin Cinema, NYC

"It seemed as if he came out from under a rock."

— Chris Jenkyns,
Jay Ward writer & artist

"He kept the Buster Keaton films so accessible that a whole generation of people had to send away to Buenos Aires in order to get prints (and see) most of Keaton's films."

— Brent Walker,
film scholar & author

"A freak of nature… I didn't hate the man… he just seemed to be unnecessarily unkind, naturally vicious, cold, mean and repulsive. You can't waste your time hating everyone who's like that."

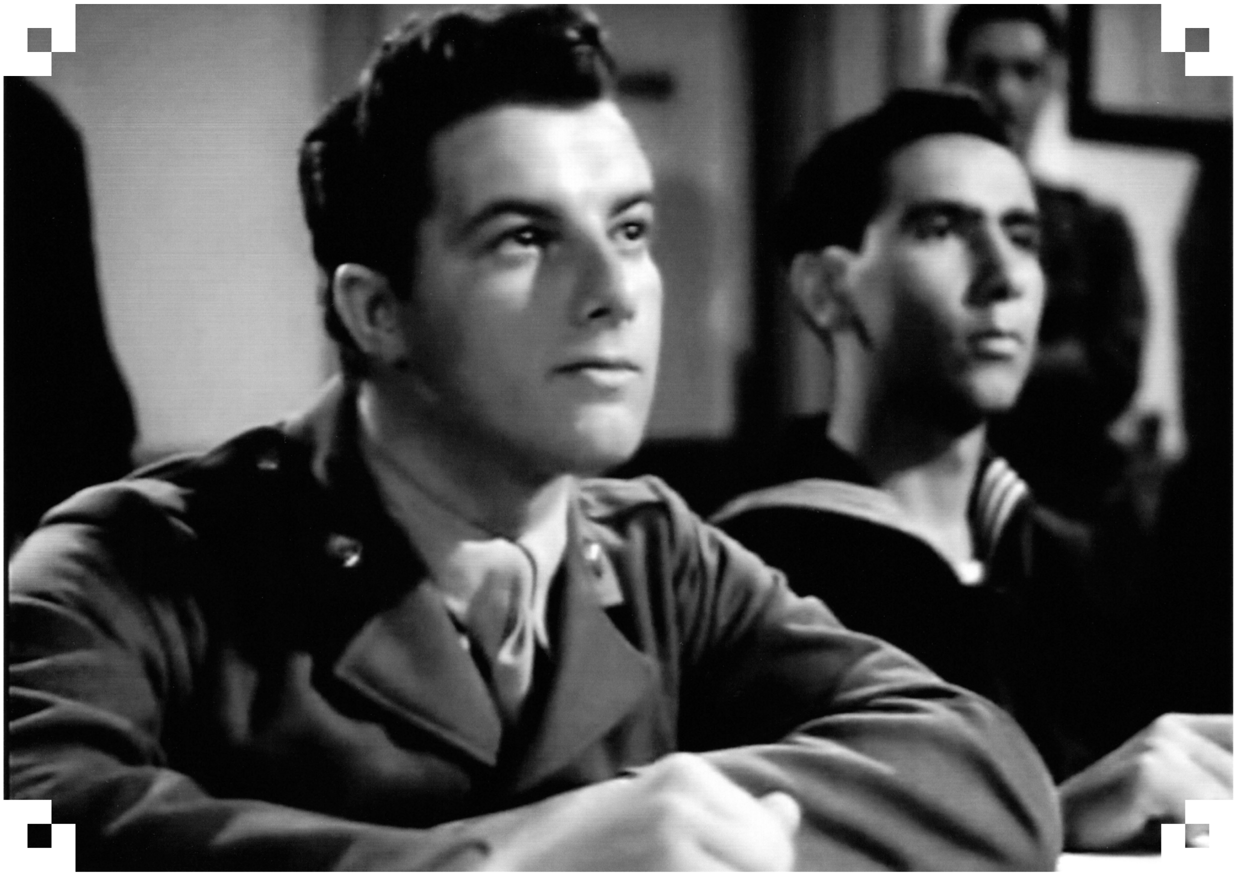
— Bob Monkhouse,
British comedian, author, & film collector

"A most unattractive character, completely without charm."

— Kevin Brownlow

"If there's an afterlife and Raymond made it there, he has a lot of explaining to do to Buster!"

— Eleanor Keaton to author, 1988



Rohauer dressed as a soldier for his single shot-closeup in MGM's Main Street After Dark (1945). It's possible that he and Buster were working on the lot that same day, some 15 years before their association began.

Editor's note: In the previous issue of Comique, *Ed's article "Raymond Rohauer: The Man Who Would Be Keaton" answered many of the questions surrounding this legendary man of mystery. Ed worked for Rohauer from 1977 to 1981 as researcher on a book project about silent comedy icon Harry Langdon. The book was never completed but, in the process, Ed became RR's weekly luncheon companion and had an insider's view into the activities and sometimes mischief perpetuated by Rohauer. Our readers responded favorably to this exposé, with many sending in their own questions. Reviled by Cinephiles in his lifetime for being an unscrupulous film thief and litigious "lawsuit-happy" combatant, Raymond Rohauer once described himself simply as "a veteran film fan and collector from Buffalo."*

He would file a lawsuit claim at the drop of a hat — but was terrified of being sued himself. He organized three film festivals (in Berlin, Paris, and Venice) during Buster Keaton's lifetime that helped restore Keaton's position as one of filmdom's true geniuses — yet after Buster's death he characterized Keaton as being simple, ignorant, and ultimately a miserable failure. He touted himself as a film preservationist, yet allowed certain unique and important nitrate film negatives of stars such as Harry Langdon, The Talmadge Sisters, Larry Semon and others to decompose.

Writing about Raymond Rohauer last time in *Comique*, I wanted to reveal this enigmatic, quirky individual from my personal experiences over the years I knew him.

Wary and suspicious by nature, he was guarded in his business dealings and quick to distrust those who approached him with proposals. He often suspected that the other party held ulterior motives that would somehow, in some way, adversely affect him. He had a dreaded fear of being "bamboozled." In most written accounts he usually comes across as a caricature, a bona fide Snidely Whiplash. In two-reel comedy parlance he was someone "who'd steal flies from a blind spider." Of course that was a significant part of his makeup, but like other eccentrics, there were contrarieties within him. Despite his paranoia regarding film hobbyists, and a vindictive streak towards anyone he remotely suspected of double-crossing him, he could actually be considerate at times.

Of course, it helped a lot if he liked you, too!

There won't be too many horror stories concerning Rohauer in this second and final installment. One reader remarked that my first article was "certainly an interesting read but not the kindest appraisal." To borrow a phrase from W.C Fields in *The Dentist*, "I'll try not to be so cruel this time."

We'll be addressing some of the questions *Comique* readers posted about the man. My replies are based on what I know firsthand, or by what I learned from Rohauer's other associates. If I don't know the answer to a question, I'll tell you that, too. In the previous issue we examined his personality up close and — as best as one could determine from this distance — what "made him tick." This time we'll take a different approach — the stories that follow are mostly anecdotal.

First, let's lead off with an incident I was reminded of after listening to a recent episode of **The Marx Brothers Council** podcast, hosted by my good friend Matthew Coniam and his equally wise expert on all things Marxian, Noah Diamond. Top comedy writer/producer/author and performer Mike Rowe was their guest, and he shared on the podcast his copy of Raymond Rohauer's interview with Groucho Marx, recorded March 8, 1967 at Groucho's home in Beverly Hills.

The actual interview is about 18 minutes' long, but back in 1978 I heard a mere snippet of the piece one Saturday when I went to call on Rohauer at his apartment. I was there for our weekly confab at nearby Wolf's Delicatessen. We were waiting for Kristian Chester to get ready and join us on our walk to Wolf's. Mr. Chester (as I always called him) was Rohauer's business partner and roommate of 30-odd years, who at age 75 unfortunately was experiencing some mobility issues. Though he was alert and mentally very sharp, I suspected that Mr. Chester might've suffered a mild stroke at some point; he always tread gingerly and tended to teeter sideways when he was without his cane. From the hallway I heard Rohauer give the familiar cry, "Come on Kris, try and hurry up!"

Whatever obstacles poor Mr. Chester was dealing with in that bedroom I did not want to know. After a few more minutes passed, Rohauer invited me to take a seat. "Mr. Chester is going to take awhile," he said, "so here, you'll like this," Rohauer continued, placing an audio cassette player on a coffee table. "I made a new copy of my interview with Groucho; this was for the Marx Brothers tribute I conducted at the Gallery of Modern Art." Rohauer had given me his "Tribute to The Marx Brothers" brochure the second time we met, back in September 1977. The brochure included a transcript of this same Groucho interview. Without the printed copy in front of me, the actual recording, while fun to hear Groucho in casual conversation, seemed to be almost identical to what I read in print.

Photographs by Bernard Gotfryd
Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and
Photographs Division

THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART
Including the HUNTINGTON HARTFORD Collection
Two Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019
RAYMOND ROHAUER, (Film Curator and Program Director)

a tribute to
the marx bros.

APRIL 18 to MAY 6, 1967

TUESDAY — SATURDAY: 3 P.M. & 5:30 P.M.

SUNDAY: 2 P.M. & 4 P.M. Closed Mondays.

A special 90-minute compilation film will be shown April 19, 20, 21 - Wed., Thurs., Fri. at 3 & 5:30 P.M. The compilation will include sequences from the following Marx Bros. motion pictures:

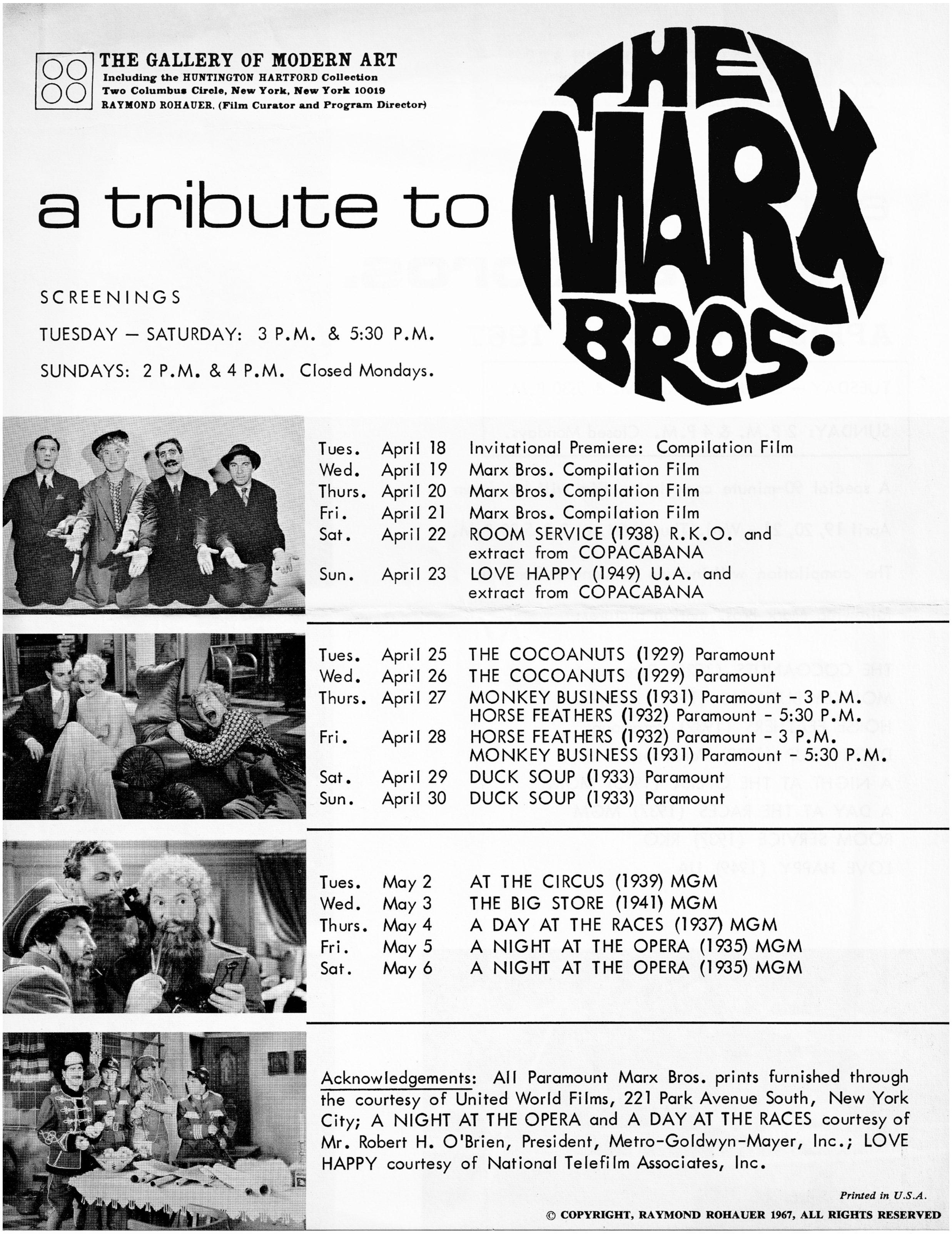
THE COCOANUTS (1929) Paramount
MONKEY BUSINESS (1931) Paramount
HORSE FEATHERS (1932) Paramount
DUCK SOUP (1933) Paramount
A NIGHT AT THE OPERA (1935) MGM
A DAY AT THE RACES (1937) MGM
ROOM SERVICE (1937) RKO
LOVE HAPPY (1949) UA

After a couple of minutes Mr. Chester appeared, cane in hand, ready to hit the streets of Broadway. Rohauer pressed the "stop" button on the machine, and with a smile announced, "You can hear the rest later." But of course — "later" only happened after 46 years! Rohauer was always distracting himself in the middle of things and when we returned to the apartment he promptly forgot about his promise, which was typical of him. Regardless of Rohauer's oversight back in 1978, I now give an appreciative "Thank You!" to Mike Rowe, Matthew Coniam, and Noah Diamond for sharing the original "unexpurgated" interview with all of us in 2024.

On another occasion — in 1979, right after the last surviving

Marx Brother, Zeppo, had died — Rohauer reminisced about the preparations for his Marx Brothers Tribute. As always, my private transcription of Rohauer's story was hastily written down while fresh in my memory as soon as I left his apartment, when I took the subway back home. Here Rohauer recalls his initial outreach to Groucho in November 1966:

"When I first contacted Groucho Marx, he told me over the phone that he wasn't interested in making a trip to New York just to kickoff a Marx Brothers film festival. The Gallery of Modern Art didn't pay fees to guests who were being honored, and I quickly realized that might've been a sore point for him. So, I assured him we'd pick up hotel and airfare



THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART
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RAYMOND ROHAUER, (Film Curator and Program Director)

a tribute to THE MARX BROS.

SCREENINGS

TUESDAY — SATURDAY: 3 P.M. & 5:30 P.M.

SUNDAYS: 2 P.M. & 4 P.M. Closed Mondays.

Tues.	April 18	Invitational Premiere: Compilation Film
Wed.	April 19	Marx Bros. Compilation Film
Thurs.	April 20	Marx Bros. Compilation Film
Fri.	April 21	Marx Bros. Compilation Film
Sat.	April 22	ROOM SERVICE (1938) R.K.O. and extract from COPACABANA
Sun.	April 23	LOVE HAPPY (1949) U.A. and extract from COPACABANA
Tues.	April 25	THE COCOANUTS (1929) Paramount
Wed.	April 26	THE COCOANUTS (1929) Paramount
Thurs.	April 27	MONKEY BUSINESS (1931) Paramount - 3 P.M. HORSE FEATHERS (1932) Paramount - 5:30 P.M.
Fri.	April 28	HORSE FEATHERS (1932) Paramount - 3 P.M. MONKEY BUSINESS (1931) Paramount - 5:30 P.M.
Sat.	April 29	DUCK SOUP (1933) Paramount
Sun.	April 30	DUCK SOUP (1933) Paramount
Tues.	May 2	AT THE CIRCUS (1939) MGM
Wed.	May 3	THE BIG STORE (1941) MGM
Thurs.	May 4	A DAY AT THE RACES (1937) MGM
Fri.	May 5	A NIGHT AT THE OPERA (1935) MGM
Sat.	May 6	A NIGHT AT THE OPERA (1935) MGM

Acknowledgements: All Paramount Marx Bros. prints furnished through the courtesy of United World Films, 221 Park Avenue South, New York City; A NIGHT AT THE OPERA and A DAY AT THE RACES courtesy of Mr. Robert H. O'Brien, President, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc.; LOVE HAPPY courtesy of National Telefilm Associates, Inc.

Printed in U.S.A.

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Comedian Joe Flynn as Captain Binghamton, whom Groucho jokingly claimed Rohauer resembled.

expenses for himself and his wife. Also, I mentioned that this was an opportunity to promote his new book, 'The Groucho Letters,' which was coming out in a couple of months, and we'd have the whole New York press corps in attendance there on opening night.

"He said, 'Yes, I did consider that.' You see, I was letting him know that he could promote the book at the tribute. I knew then that I stirred up his interest. So next I told him we'd also like to invite Zeppo, and he sounded very pleased at the idea. Groucho finally said, 'Okay, I'll do it, and I'll make sure my brother can make it, too.' This all happened months before the event took place.

"A few weeks before the start of the festival, I went to Groucho's house so we could record an interview to use in the brochure. I arrived at his home, a beautiful house, and when I introduced myself, he kind of looked me over up and down. He seemed a little grumpy, and this made me feel uncomfortable. And y'know, he had that eye thing, that crooked eye? I didn't know for sure which one I should be looking at! Finally, he said, 'You're Raymond Rohauer? You're sure you're not—Captain Binghamton? Where'd you park your battleship?'"

"I didn't know who this Captain Binghamton was — Mr. Chester had to tell me later that this was a character played by an actor [Joe Flynn] on a TV comedy show called 'McHale's Navy.' I might've given a nervous laugh when Groucho said that to me. Anyhow, Groucho was now finished with joking and he wanted to get this interview over and done with.

"He acted as though this was going to be a chore. He was serious, it was all business between us. He told me he had to take an important call shortly so he hoped I could get what I needed without taking too long. Meanwhile I was waiting for a photographer to arrive to take pictures for the brochure, and while I was asking Groucho questions, I could tell that he was becoming annoyed because the photographer was late."

"We spoke for about twenty minutes. Finally, the photographer showed up just as our interview was ending. Even though Groucho was upset that the guy came late, he posed for pictures and was very obliging until his housekeeper came and told him that his important call was on the line. Groucho told me he'd be on the phone for a while but that he still had to tell me something: he said 'Stick around, Binghamton.' And just like that, all of a sudden, he became a little friendlier."

"Now, something strange and very embarrassing happened. I asked the housekeeper if I could use a bathroom. She mumbled something I didn't catch but pointed to where it was. I went to where I thought she pointed but when I opened the door there was a woman in there, trying on clothes, standing there in her underwear! We both stared at each other for a split-second. 'Oh my gaaad!'"

I asked Rohauer, "The woman said 'Oh my god?'" "No," he replied, "I thought to myself, 'oh my gaaad!' I thought, this is awful! I quickly shut the door, moved away from it, and now poked around slowly till I found the bathroom. Fortunately, no one else was around to see what had happened."

"When Groucho finished his call, he seemed more relaxed. He came over and told me that he was looking forward to going to New York with his brother for the tribute, and he told me he'd have his publisher send over as many books as I thought we'd need to give out to the press.

"He also instructed me to be sure to invite Harry Ruby to be there and also to provide a piano, because if he felt up to it he might sing a few songs. Then he introduced me to his wife [Eden] who just entered the room. It was the same woman I had seen standing in her underwear! But his wife and I both played it cool: 'how do you do, nice to meet you…'"

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Including the HUNTINGTON HARTFORD Collection
Two Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019
RAYMOND ROHAUER, (Film Curator and Program Director)

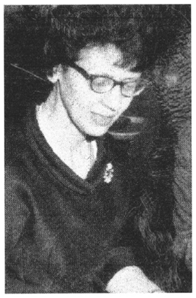
JUNE 6 - 11, 1967

THE MARX BROS.

Animal Crackers

ONE WEEK ONLY

SHOWN DAILY AT 3 & 5:30 P.M. TUES.—SAT.
2 & 4 P.M. SUNDAY (No 5:30 showing June 8)



IN PERSON ...

Maxine Marx

daughter of Chico Marx will be present at the 5:30 film showing June 6, 7, 9, 10.
(There will be no 5:30 showing on June 8th.)

Harry Ruby, who wrote the music for ANIMAL CRACKERS, with Groucho Marx and Raymond Rohauer at the opening of the Tribute to the Marx Bros. at the Gallery of Modern Art, April 18, 1967.

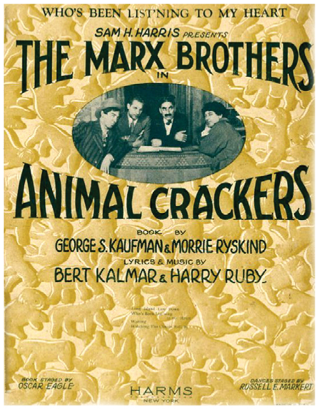
ANIMAL CRACKERS (Paramount, 1930) was the Marx Bros. second film, directed by Victor Heerman, and based on the musical play by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind. The music and lyrics were by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, and included "Hooray for Captain Spaulding" and "Why Am I So Romantic?"

The Cast:

Captain Jeffrey T. Spaulding	Groucho Marx
The Professor	Harpo Marx
Signor Emanuel Ravelli	Chico Marx
Horatio Jamison	Zeppo Marx
Mrs. Rittenhouse	Margaret Dumont
Arabella Rittenhouse	Lillian Roth

In the recent Gallery of Modern Art Tribute to the Marx Bros., ANIMAL CRACKERS was not scheduled due to a complicated copyright situation. In fact, ANIMAL CRACKERS cannot be shown in theatres or on TV within the United States without permission of the copyright holders. Special permission has been obtained to screen ANIMAL CRACKERS at the Gallery for one week only, June 6 - 11, 1967, through the kindness of Lew R. Wasserman, President of MCA, Morrie Ryskind, and Anne Kaufman Schneider, daughter of the late George S. Kaufman. We are also grateful to Groucho Marx for his efforts on our behalf. Raymond Rohauer, Film Curator and Program Dir.

Sheet music and a promotion folder for the original Broadway stage presentation of "Animal Crackers"


WHO'S BEEN LIST'NING TO MY HEART
SAM H. HARRIS PRESENTS
THE MARX BROTHERS
IN
ANIMAL CRACKERS
BOOK BY
GEORGE S. KAUFMAN & MORRIE RYSKIND
LYRICS & MUSIC BY
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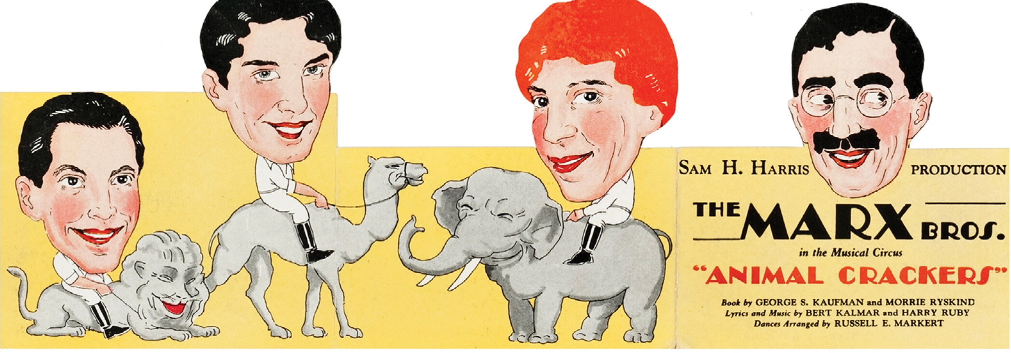

SAM H. HARRIS PRODUCTION
THE MARX BROS.
in the Musical Circus
"ANIMAL CRACKERS"
Book by GEORGE S. KAUFMAN and MORRIE RYSKIND
Lyrics and Music by BERT KALMAR and HARRY RUBY
Dances Arranged by RUSSELL E. MARKERT

Rohauer pulled off a coup when he obtained permission to screen *Animal Crackers*, never seen on US television and not shown theatrically in the US since 1953.

"Anyway, when we held the tribute in April, Groucho and Zeppo were both there with their wives for the opening. Again, he was all business with me — but he did tell Zeppo 'This is Mr. Raymond Rosenberg.' This time I laughed really hard, because I realized he was kidding, but I also laughed out of relief that Groucho was in a good mood! He could be very intimidating without making any wisecracks, just by the look he gave you. He wasn't always acting like the friendly quizmaster on *You Bet Your Life*!"

Back to 1979: I told Rohauer he was being a good sport about Groucho's testy moments and gentle barbs. "Sure!" he replied. "Who doesn't want to be insulted by Groucho Marx! It's just a shame I can't talk about this publicly!" Translation: Rohauer was flattered that Groucho sent a few wisecracks his way; but it's a shame that Rohauer's ego was too big to laugh at himself in the public arena.

"I had my assistant Richard Anobile make arrangements with Universal in their New York offices to borrow 16mm prints of the Marx Brothers films made for Paramount, and I had him contact people I knew at MGM to get ahold of those later films. One film that was difficult to acquire but that I badly wanted to include was *A Night in Casablanca*.

It wasn't available theatrically and I knew that a lot of people wanted to see it. But I knew David Loew, who produced the film. So, I called him in Los Angeles and he said he'd give Groucho his personal 16mm print to bring along with him. I wasn't too keen on the idea of Loew giving the print to him, because Groucho told me that he didn't really care for the film.

"But I remembered seeing it years before and thought it was pretty good, so maybe Groucho would change his mind once he saw the film again. When Groucho arrived in New York for the film festival I asked him for the print. 'Print? What print?' He told me that Loew never gave him the film, but afterwards he kept saying, 'Gee, it's too bad Dave Loew forgot to give me *A Night in Casablanca*. I haven't seen it since the forties!' After the festival was over, I called Loew. He told me that Groucho had stopped off before coming to New York and picked up the print! It was in his luggage the whole time!

"Meanwhile, I had already announced that we were going to show a rare Marx film that hadn't been seen theatrically in years. So now I had to make up a story and tell the press that the print of *A Night in Casablanca* was too warped to run through the projector. See, this was Groucho's way of dealing with a situation that he didn't like. He just ignored what I asked him to do."

Groucho and Erin Flemming

"But that got me thinking that maybe instead we could show the Marx Brothers' second film, *Animal Crackers*. Universal said they didn't own the literary rights to the film, they only owned the picture elements but not the soundtrack. I had an attorney do some research, and it turns out that *Animal Crackers* hadn't been shown in the United States since 1953, when it was last screened theatrically. It was never revived again in the US, and it wasn't included in the TV package when Universal purchased the Paramount film library."

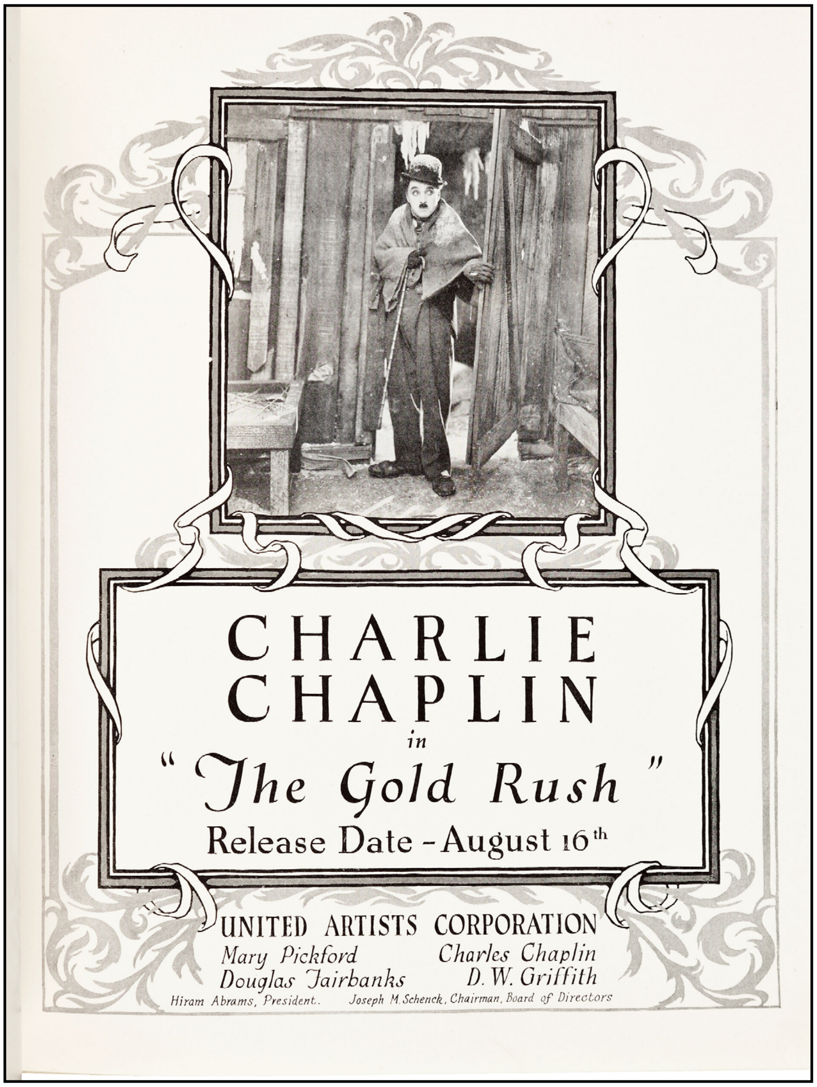
"For *Animal Crackers*, I asked Groucho if he would sign a letter with me, asking the head of Universal/MCA [Lew Wasserman] if we could show *Animal Crackers* during our festival. Groucho agreed to do it, but he told me 'They'll never give you the film, you're wasting your time.' Well, I said it won't hurt to ask, and a month later Universal okayed a limited screening — for two weeks — so we got to include *Animal Crackers* legally, and with the okay from George S. Kaufman's daughter, who controlled Kaufman's estate, and Morrie Ryskind. They wrote the play and had been Groucho's friends so I know they helped grease the wheels. Years later when *Animal Crackers* was finally given a general release [in 1974], I knew that no one in the United States could have seen the film since I ran it at The Gallery in 1967. But of course, nobody would ever give me credit for that!"

Postscript: I didn't tell Rohauer that I saw *Animal Crackers* at Marymount College in Manhattan — in 1969.

Back to the present: I never had an opportunity to compare the Groucho/Rohauer recording to the printed transcript that appeared in the brochure — until now, of course. And there are a few interesting discrepancies. When Rohauer and Groucho are discussing the Canadian critics' poll of the "three funniest films ever made," it's interesting how Groucho dismisses Buster Keaton's *The General* and Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*, confusing the latter title with *The Gold Rush*. Rohauer makes no attempt to correct Groucho, however, and lets Groucho's negative comment stand ("Chaplin made funnier films than that"). It's included in the brochure, even though Groucho was talking about *City Lights* and not the film that actually took top critical honors, *The Gold Rush*.

Obviously I never had the opportunity to discuss this gaffe with Rohauer, but I'd wager he was pleased to publish Groucho's knock on Chaplin and *The Gold Rush* in particular, especially since Chaplin went after Rohauer in court over this film. Rohauer was indicted in 1962 on 29 charges of "willful infringement of copyright for profit" on various Chaplin titles including *The Gold Rush*. Chaplin only dropped the suit after Rohauer surrendered his bootlegged feature film collection of UA-Chaplin titles — or so Chaplin's attorneys thought.

As late as 1969, I saw Rohauer's silent version of *The Gold Rush* at my neighborhood movie theater; the print was worn and scratchy from years of use, but that same lone print continued floating around New York's outer boroughs as the bottom half of a double bill for at least another three years.



CHARLIE
CHAPLIN
in
"The Gold Rush"
Release Date - August 16th

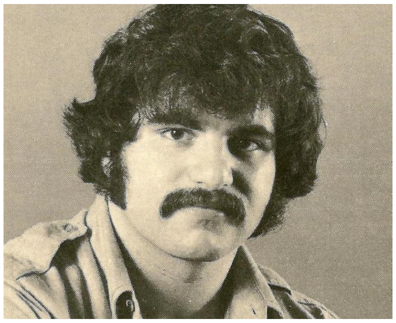
UNITED ARTISTS CORPORATION
Mary Pickford
Charles Chaplin
Douglas Fairbanks
D. W. Griffith
Hiram Abrams, President.
Joseph M. Schenck, Chairman, Board of Directors

Rohauer also didn't surrender the Mutual outtakes, which Chaplin did not own and which were never copyrighted. The history behind Rohauer's illegal acquisition of the Chaplin Mutual outtakes was one of the first stories he shared with me, but it's already covered superbly in Kevin Brownlow's excellent book, *In Search of Charlie Chaplin,* where you can read Rohauer's account in full detail.

On the *Marx Brothers Podcast*, both Matthew and Noah wondered whether Rohauer took liberties when transcribing Groucho's interview for the brochure without Groucho's knowledge. During my time working for him when we conducted interviews with people for the Langdon book, Rohauer always showed every proposed revision to the interviewee — giving them the opportunity to make additional modifications, or to grant final approval. Next, he would have the recipient initial the final document and sign a release, which was witnessed and signed by Rohauer and another person; often enough I was the co-signer. I'd imagine it must've been the same procedure with Groucho.

Considering the fast and loose changes made between the recording itself and the printed transcript, my guess is that Groucho didn't particularly care much either way and considered this to be a harmless interview. Without electronic means to listen to the tape conveniently via a coast-to-coast hookup in 1967, it's possible Groucho only saw the printed transcript and gave it his okay.

Richard J. Anobile, later a movie book author and chronicler of The Marx Brothers, was Rohauer's 20-year-old assistant at The Gallery of Modern Art, doing legwork for Rohauer's various tributes held in that venue. It was through Rohauer's Marx Brothers tribute that Anobile made contact with



Richard J. Anobile

people at Universal and MGM which helped ease the way for his eventual *Why A Duck?* book four years later. His earlier affiliation with Rohauer made it logical that several of his later frame blowup books would draw from Rohauer's Buster Keaton and W.C. Fields properties.

I only met Anobile once, and under unusual circumstances. Rohauer brought me along on my first trip to L.A. in 1979 and Anobile happened to be on the same flight. He was in New York to pitch a frame blowup book of the movie *Alien*. He knelt down in the aisle and chatted for about ten minutes with Rohauer and genuinely seemed to be a nice guy. He gave me the mockup of his Alien book proposal to look through, and I recall Rohauer asking him if Erin Fleming was still pursuing a lawsuit against him for allowing Groucho's unedited and unflattering comments to be included in his *Marx Brothers Scrapbook*. "No, and I think people are realizing she's crazy" was his assessment. Afterwards Rohauer remarked that Richard's big mistake on the *Scrapbook* was that he never obtained a signed release from Groucho to publish the material intact. Rohauer opined, "He [Anobile] gave himself a black eye on that one."

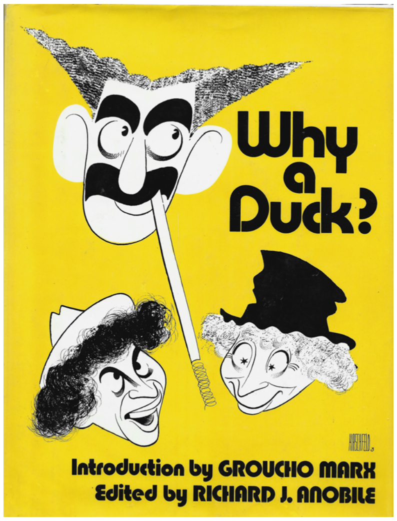
The above stories were the only times that Rohauer ever spoke to me about the Marx Brothers. If he had owned the rights to any one of their films, or even one of Groucho's solo movies, I'll bet he would've been talking about them constantly.

W.C. Fields used to claim that he feigned a broken arm so that his act would not have to follow The Marx Brothers when they all played vaudeville. I guess it's the same situation with Marx Brothers anecdotes: anything that follows them is anticlimactic…perhaps including the rest of this article! But we'll soldier on anyway. Now, let's get to the readers' questions:

"I was fascinated by the amazing article about Raymond Rohauer. But I believe that the article is lacking in one very important point. What happened to Raymond Rohauer's film collection after he died?"

Glad to answer this, but at the same time let's remember that my previous article was about Rohauer as a person, it was intentionally not about his film collection. My guess is that many readers already know the answer to this question, so I'll offer a brief summary of the events: After Rohauer's death, his films were eventually sold to British movie producer Gary Dartnall, who then created The Douris Corporation.

Douris proceeded to license the cream of the Rohauer collection to the lucrative home video market. This included the major works of Buster Keaton, Douglas Fairbanks, Harry Langdon, D.W. Griffith, and a sampling of the 350-plus Paramount talkie shorts Rohauer purchased from National Telefilm Associates.



When Douris experienced financial difficulties and was forced to sell off its holdings, Cohen Media acquired the Rohauer films in 2011. Cohen continues to issue new Blu-Ray and DVD editions through the present day, releasing through the following home video firms: Kino (in the USA), Eureka! (in the UK and now also in the USA), and Elephant (in France). Since 1995, anyone can buy Rohauer's most popular titles legally to enjoy, as the saying goes, in the comfort of their own home.

"Why was Rohauer so detested by film collectors? He did make a lot of rare films available. You could go see his films in a movie theater, wasn't that good enough?"

Today's situation is a far cry from the bad old days of the 1970s, when a Buster Keaton film collector might receive a threatening letter from one of Rohauer's attorneys, or worse, faced the possibility that the FBI would come a-knocking at three in the morning to confiscate, say, an 8mm print of W.C. Fields' first film, a silent one-reeler titled *Pool Sharks* (1915).

That particular story might sound far-fetched but I can assure you that it nearly happened. *Pool Sharks* was sold by several dealers in the 8mm home movie market. The dealers were mostly people who ran small Mom-and-Pop outfits. Rohauer singled out one firm, Thunderbird Films (run by Tom Dunnahoo) and seriously contemplated contacting the FBI about their 8mm

Raymond Rohauer, Joe Smith (of the comedy team Smith & Dale), Rohauer's erstwhile photographer Chris K. Economakis, Ed Watz. At the Actors' Home, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, July 1979. Ninety-five year old Joe Smith reminisced about Buster Keaton whom he knew "since Buster was a kid" as part of The Three Keatons. Rohauer wasn't interested in Buster's vaudeville days but I got a nice interview from Joe, including his description of the Keaton's "Anvil Chorus" bit. Subsequently on a later visit of my own, I interviewed Frank Rowan, who played the gangster in Buster's *The Sidewalks of New York*.

Pool Sharks release, using his Washington D.C. attorney as the liaison.

In the end Rohauer's attorney learned through subpoenaing Tom Dunnahoo's accounting records that 65 8mm prints of *Pool Sharks* had been sold. The cost might've been around $8 a print. Rohauer was talked out of trying to get those prints back from the movie buffs that bought them. He told me, "My attorney said that if I did that to all these small-gauge collectors out there, I'd ruin my reputation with everybody. Also, maybe more importantly, it would cost me a lot of money to go after each of them!"

Still, Rohauer insisted he retained exclusive ownership rights to the film. But in reality, *Pool Sharks* had fallen into the public domain back in 1943, meaning that anyone could legally own a copy; therefore, Rohauer had no legitimate claim against anyone.

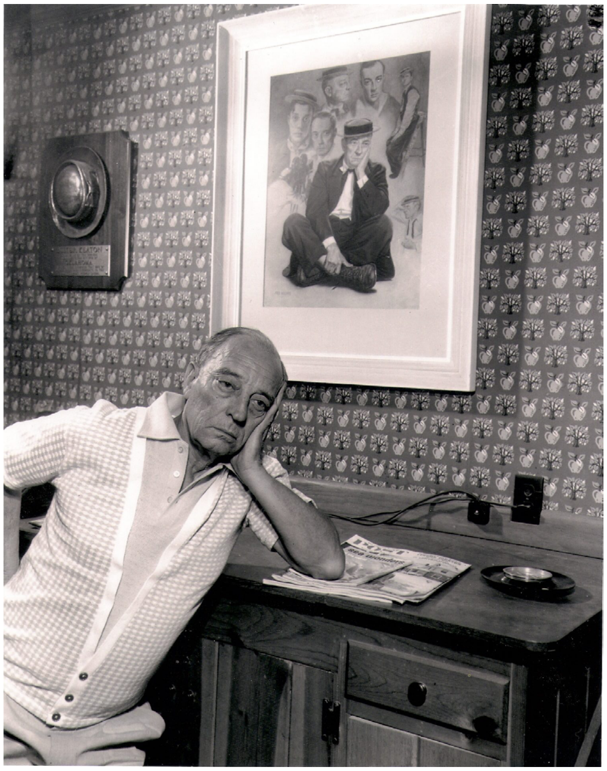
In trying to convince me that he was the rightful owner, Rohauer told me that he purchased one of collector John E. Allen's 35mm prints on this title in 1958, but he also admitted *it wasn't the only copy of the film* that Allen possessed. If anyone had a right to grouse about *Pool Sharks* it would've been John E. Allen — because he sold Rohauer that 35mm print for a mere $100. But Rohauer never let facts get in the way of a good lawsuit!

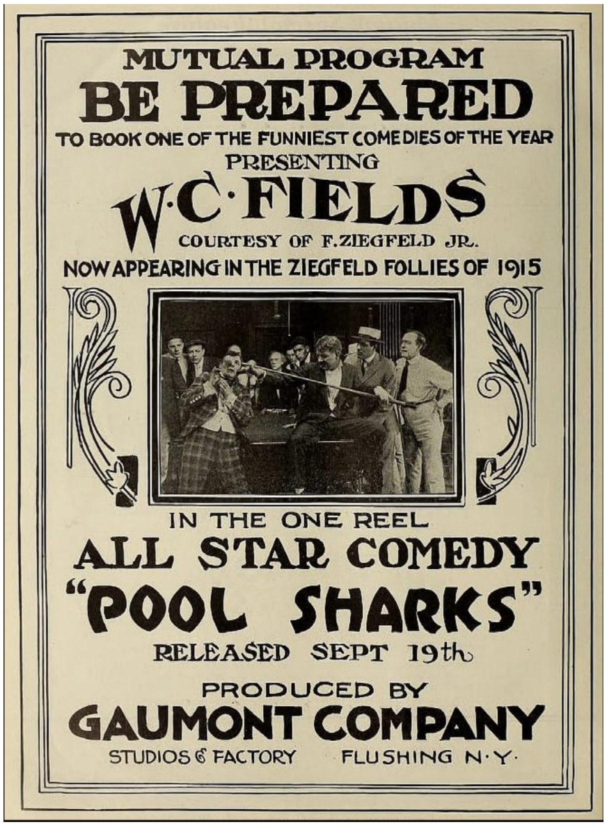
Rohauer went on to make *Pool Sharks* a significant selling point in his package of W.C. Fields comedy shorts. During the Fields renaissance of the mid-1960s and early '70s Rohauer paraded his jewel box package of 6 Fields shorts endlessly through theatrical showings, brief TV clips, and even licensed frame blowups. It was easy pickings for Rohauer, who didn't even bother to issue new prints of the films.

He kept the now-meaningless home movie notice ("licensed for home and nontheatrical use") on the prints he made from Blackhawk Films' negatives for the home movie market. The last time I saw this Fields program at the Carnegie Hall Cinema, the prints had become so battered from wear and splices that whole reams of dialogue were incomprehensible and the entire fadeout gag to *The Barber Shop* was missing.

At the other end of the collection, Rohauer's most popular series of films — his Buster Keaton features and shorts — were nearly inaccessible to most of the audiences that wanted to see them. As far as Rohauer was concerned, once he had control over Buster's silent movies, these films were his and his alone, to dole out for screenings where and when he felt like it.

Of course in the beginning Rohauer needed Buster, whom he described to me as his "key to open doors that were otherwise closed." Eleanor Keaton told me that "Raymond used to call us all the time, day or night, but we almost never saw him. The only times we really saw Raymond for any extended period of time was in Europe. Even then, Raymond was antsy, he'd disappear. Buster only saw him when Raymond needed him to be someplace with a promo showing or to sign some legal papers."





MUTUAL PROGRAM
BE PREPARED
TO BOOK ONE OF THE FUNNIEST COMEDIES OF THE YEAR
PRESENTING
W·C·FIELDS
COURTESY OF F. ZIEGFELD JR.
NOW APPEARING IN THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES OF 1915
IN THE ONE REEL
ALL STAR COMEDY
"POOL SHARKS"
RELEASED SEPT 19th
PRODUCED BY
GAUMONT COMPANY
STUDIOS & FACTORY FLUSHING N·Y·

For nearly 20 years, from 1962 until about 1979, Rohauer had access to the classic Keaton films virtually locked up. They were never broadcast on television and none of them were available to the new home video market. If you wanted to see Rohauer's Keatons, the only option for most audiences was to find them playing in a movie theater. Unless you lived in a large metropolitan city, chances are you were out of luck. As a 12-year-old kid, I was one of the few lucky ones, and boy, did I know it.

New York was my hometown when The Elgin Cinema ran the first U.S. Keaton Film Festival in September 1970 — thirty-five days of 31 Keaton silents. The entire program was brought back to The Elgin in 1971; and once more in 1975; and that — was it. I didn't get to see certain titles like *Three Ages* again until I worked for Rohauer and screened his 16mm copy in the apartment; he never rented or loaned *Three Ages* to anyone. Other titles — *Go West*, *Battling Butler*, most of the shorts — I didn't see again in a theater for 20 years. And New York was considered one of the more "accessible" locations to see the Keatons! I had friends in Chicago who never had the chance to see most of Buster's best work until the 1990s. Rohauer didn't have a tight rein on these films, he had a chokehold. Perhaps this withholding of the films gave him a false sense of power over others, who knows?

Once he complained to me that Hal Roach's biggest mistake was licensing his Laurel & Hardy comedies for home movie sales through Blackhawk Films. "Those films are worth nothing commercially now," he'd say. I pointed out that over the past few years Laurel & Hardy features were regularly revived in theaters to packed audiences, and this in spite of the home movie trade plus the free daily showings on TV.

If there were about 50,000 film collectors in the USA, as Rohauer maintained, there were still millions of moviegoers in the 1970s and '80s. He'd say, "I'll never give away the Keatons the way Roach gave away his film library." Rohauer could've earned a lot more money and made Keaton fans very happy if he was willing to share his films through established channels. In 1976 even Charlie Chaplin released all of his features in beautiful quality Super 8mm prints. I was convinced that in Rohauer's case, this was an issue about maintaining total control — "you'll see it when I let you see it."

Blasé bear with Buster in a posed shot from *Hard Luck* (1921). Keaton's personal favorite of all his two-reelers, and the last film Rohauer added to his collection in the 1980s. Had he not alienated Italian film archivists with his earlier attempts to confiscate certain titles, he would've known their prints on this title were available since 1960s.

"What became of Raymond Rohauer's money, and how much did he leave behind?"

Whoa — that's a loaded question, one that comes with a backstory to it. Perhaps it's fitting that the executor of Rohauer's estate was Richard Gordon, a longtime producer of horror movies. In the late 1970s Rohauer made a deal with Gordon to remake *The Cat and the Canary*, a property RR acquired by purchasing the literary rights to the original stage play. While this new version of Canary was in production, Rohauer became impressed with Gordon's no-nonsense business approach; Rohauer once told me "He's the only man dealing with films that I believe I can trust."

When Rohauer died, it became Gordon's responsibility as trustee to oversee the estate. He also guaranteed that caregiving services would be provided for Rohauer's partner, Kristian Chester, then an extremely frail 84-year-old living in the suite he had shared with Rohauer. Mr. Chester refused to move into a retirement home and Gordon respected these wishes. He died in 1989, and Rohauer's last business partner (Alan Twyman) who was distributing the RR films, died in 1990. Richard Gordon then directed his attention towards The Rohauer Collection, which totaled around 700 titles (and not the "10,000 films" that Rohauer had often claimed in print).

Gordon told me he didn't want to be burdened with the responsibilities of managing Rohauer's estate. He remained an adviser when the films were sold en masse to The Douris Corporation, but his duties were turned over to a law firm specializing in the management of estate properties. The combined donor assets of Raymond Rohauer and Kristian Chester became the basis of *The Rohauer Collection Foundation,* Inc., a living trust treated as a private foundation. The mission statement of the foundation is "the giving primarily for film preservation" — remember those words.

Danish immigrant Kristian Chester proved to be Rohauer's financial angel once the two men became acquainted during the mid-1940s. Mr. Chester immigrated to the United States around 1921, a day laborer who gradually worked his way to Los Angeles. He told me he was paid "insanely well" as a servant to movie stars during the 1930s and '40s. "I was good at hiding their indiscretions from the public. That's a talent!" Frugal and business savvy, he purchased real estate during the WWII years. "I'd pick up soldiers hitchhiking back to their base. They came from all over America, and they often told me how beautiful it was in California. They'd say they're going to move out here after the war was over." With this notion in his head Mr. Chester bought SoCal real estate as an investment. Sure enough, a housing boom took off once the war ended.

(Article continued on p. 26.)

front cover, top: from THE COCOANUTS (1929)
left to right: Zeppo, Groucho, Chico, Harpo

front cover, bottom: studio publicity still
top to bottom: Groucho, Zeppo, Harpo, Chico, Gummo

the marx bros.

by Raymond Rohauer

Film Curator and Program Director,
The Gallery of Modern Art

(This interview with Groucho Marx and Raymond Rohauer was recorded March 8, 1967 in Beverly Hills, California)

AN INTERVIEW WITH GROUCHO MARX

Rohauer: Groucho, according to a biography of the Marx Brothers your mother and father, Minnie and Sam Marx, were married in 1889. Leonard (Chico) was born on March 22, 1889; Adolph (Harpo), on November 28, 1891; Julius (Groucho) on October 2, 1895; Herbert (Zeppo) on February 25, 1901 and Milton's (Gummo) birthdate was not mentioned. How did you acquire those famous nicknames?

Groucho: Well, the nicknames were assigned to us by a fellow performer during a poker game. "Chico" for his fondness of chicks, "Harpo" for his instrument, "Gummo" for the gumboots which he wore, and "Groucho" for my outlook on life.

Rohauer: What about Zeppo?

Groucho: That is the only name which I can't explain.

Rohauer: Groucho, how did you first get together with your brothers for motion pictures?

Groucho: We'd been together for fifteen years before that in Vaudeville. We had a very big act, and decided that with adding a few more things to it we'd have enough for a Broadway play – so we did – and it ran for a year in 1924, called *I'll Say She Is.*

Rohauer: Was your mother largely responsible for bringing the act together?

Groucho: She was a contributing factor, but I wouldn't say she was largely responsible. See, her brother was an actor in show business, Al Shean of Gallagher and Shean – and she was kind of misty-eyed about show business and thought it would be a great thing for us, and we wouldn't have to work. Being an actor, you wouldn't have to get up early in the morning. I was the first one on the stage, as a singer when I was 14, then I went out on the road with a show called *The Man of Our Choice* in which I played the hero. Between the acts I sang songs. I used to sing in the Protestant Church on Madison Avenue in the choir before that, and I had a good voice. Then Gummo joined the act, around 1912 and he could sing well. Then Harpo came in and he couldn't sing so he became the comedian of the three. He played a butcher boy with a yellow wig, and a basket of frankfurters which he was taking to somebody's house to deliver. Then we got another kid and put him in the act because we wanted to be able to sing in harmony, and only Gummo and I could sing and Harpo couldn't, and we called the act "The Four Nightingales". Then our voices started changing, as they do at those ages, and we started to do comedy, and invent jokes and use them in the act and eliminate a good deal of the singing, as we found that the audiences were in a pretty hostile mood when we sang. It wasn't really safe to be on the stage. So from that, Chico was working for a music publisher at that time playing the piano, then we put him in the act; and decided to make it a school act, and for a brief time my mother and sister, who could both sing well, they were in the act too. They were then about 45 years old which will give you an idea of how gullible audiences were in those days and how easily pleased they were. We did the school act for two or three years and it got to be very funny. Chico played an Italian, Harpo played a dummy, and I was the teacher. I got a white wig and made myself up. I was twenty years old, and looked older than Mark Twain.

Rohauer: What about the short film made in 1926 called **Humorisk?**

Groucho: No, it was never finished and it wasn't very good. Luckily there are no copies available.

Rohauer: Then the first film to be finished and released was **The Cocoanuts** (1929).

Groucho: By that time we were in big time Vaudeville for 12 or 13 years, playing the Palace, Riverside, Brooklyn, New York, Newark, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, a whole tour. There were two tours, in those days; there was the Keith Circuit and the Orpheum Circuit. The Keith Circuit extended to the Mississippi River, and the Orpheum from there to the coast, and that was big time.

Rohauer: Did the film **The Cocoanuts** follow closely on your stage work?

Groucho: Almost exactly.

Rohauer: Was the role that you played in the film almost the same as on the stage?

Groucho: Just before *Cocoanuts* we did *I'll Say She Is* which was an enlargement of our Vaudeville act, and that played for a year at the Casino Theatre at 39th Street and Broadway. Then after that Sam Harris saw us in that show. It was a very funny show, probably the funniest show we ever did. He signed us up to do *Cocoanuts*. While we were appearing on Broadway in *Cocoanuts* we were making **Animal Crackers** (1930), again under the management of Sam Harris for Paramount at the Astoria Studio. Then we were signed up for five pictures at Paramount and came west, and we've been west ever since. We went with Irving Thalberg at M.G.M. we did **Room Service** at R.K.O. and I did a picture with Sinatra without the boys. Then I did a picture with Carmen Miranda called **Copacabana.** A pretty lousy picture. Some were good and some were bad, that's the way it is with everybody.

Rohauer: From **Cocoanuts, Animal Crackers, Monkey Business** (1931), **Horse Feathers** (1932) and **Duck Soup** (1933), which one of that group do you like best?

Groucho: **Duck Soup.** Leo McCarey directed it.

Rohauer: Did he have much to do with working out the gags, since he worked with Hal Roach?

Groucho: Yes, he was pretty good with gags too.

Rohauer: Do you feel that Irving Thalberg contributed much to **Night at the Opera** (1935)?

Groucho: A great deal, yes, he concentrated on making the stories more sensible. His theory was that you could be just as funny and have a logical story than being funny like in **Duck Soup** and have a crazy story; and he was right. Those pictures did a much bigger gross than the ones we did at Paramount.

Rohauer: Do you favor **Night at the Opera**?

Groucho: Yes, I just read that they took a poll in Canada, and it was rated the 3rd funniest movie ever made, and they had Buster Keaton's *The General* in second place and a Chaplin picture**,** *The Gold Rush* took 1st place. I don't agree with them, I think **Night at the Opera** was better than both of them. Chaplin did a lot of better pictures than the one they chose for that.

Rohauer: Do you have any comment to make about **Room Service** (1938)?

Groucho: I think it was one of the funniest pictures we made. Very successful.

Rohauer: What about **At the Circus** and **Go West**?

Groucho: In the meantime, Thalberg had died and we were under different management at M.G.M. I made **Go West** (1940), **At the Circus** (1939), and **The Big Store** (1941). **The Big Store** was the funniest of those three.

Rohauer: Then you made **Night in Casablanca** (1946). Did you like it?

Groucho: It had some funny stuff in it. All the pictures had some funny stuff in them, but some pictures were better than others, which is only normal, I think. **Go West** was one of the worst pictures we made. It had a funny scene at the finish with the train burning, and some funny stagecoach scenes but . . .

Sam Marx Minnie Marx

Minnie Marx managed the five boys until Chico took over.

Minnie Marx appeared in vaudeville sketches with the boys.

During *"Home Again"* in 1916, their first big vaudeville act.
left to right: Harpo, Gummo, Chico, Groucho.

Rohauer: Margaret Dumont was a definite asset to your films.

Groucho: You know, the curious thing about Margaret, in all the years we played together she never seemed to vary. She was always the austere, dignified dowager that we presented in pictures. That was part of her charm. She actually didn't understand any of the jokes. I'm serious —there was a joke in **Duck Soup** which was at the finish of the picture. It was a kind of a war and we were in a small cottage – Margaret and myself. She said to me, "What are you doing, Rufus?" I said, "I'm fighting for your honor which is more than you ever did." And later she asked me what did I mean by that.

Rohauer: Away from pictures, did you and your brothers socialize very much?

Groucho: We were always very close; never had a fight in all the years we were together.

Rohauer: Did each member of the team contribute something throughout the years?

Groucho: I was the talker of the three. Chico was a comedy straight man for me and Harpo, who did business and pantomime gags which were mostly his own.

Rohauer: Would you ever care to go back to pictures again?

Groucho: No. Don't forget, I did a quiz show for fourteen years, *"You Bet Your Life"* The only honest quiz show that was on the air. This is true, all the others were investigated after the scandals.

Rohauer: About the book, THE GROUCHO LETTERS which is being released by Simon & Schuster. I was wondering, how did this come about?

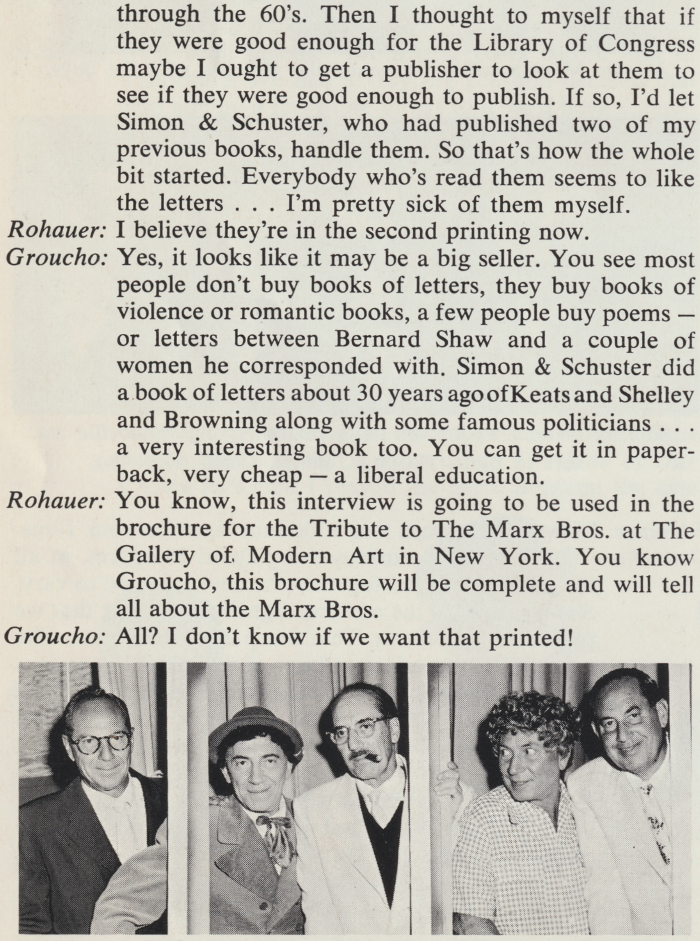
Groucho: Well, I've always been a letter writer. I'm a writer of books and gags and jokes in magazines, and I just have a lot of fun writing letters to people who also happen to be good letter writers. Goody Ace, James Thurber, Fred Allen and people like that. You can't get better than that, and it just so happened that we became correspondents. Well, all these letters piled up in my office and my secretary at the time wouldn't get rid of them. I said "get rid of them", I kept stepping all over them. You see, there were three times the amount as we used in the book. Well, she said no and told me to keep the letters, that a lot of them were very good and someday I might want to use them. I couldn't figure out why, but after she left us I had all these letters. I was on the Johnny Carson show one night and I spoke about these letters. The head of the Library of Congress had heard the show that night and he said that he would like to see some of them. He felt that if they were anything like my conversation on the quiz show and the movies, they would be very funny. I sent them to him, and he said that he would like to see some more; eventually he asked me to send over all the letters I had so that they could keep them as an example of American humor from the 30's through the 60's. Then I thought to myself that if they were good enough for the Library of Congress maybe I ought to get a publisher to look at them to see if they were good enough to publish. If so, I'd let Simon & Schuster, who had published two of my previous books, handle them. So that's how the whole bit started. Everybody who's read them seems to like the letters . . . I'm pretty sick of them myself.

Rohauer: I believe they're in the second printing now.

Groucho: Yes, it looks like it may be a big seller. You see most people don't buy books of letters, they buy books of violence or romantic books, a few people buy poems – or letters between Bernard Shaw and a couple of women he corresponded with. Simon & Schuster did a book of letters about 30 years ago of Keats and Shelley and Browning along with some famous politicians . . . a very interesting book too. You can get it in paperback, very cheap – a liberal education.

Rohauer: You know, this interview is going to be used in the brochure for the Tribute to The Marx Bros. at The Gallery of Modern Art in New York. You know Groucho, this brochure will be complete and will tell all about the Marx Bros.

Groucho: All? I don't know if we want that printed!



Reunion of the five Marx Bros. in the early fifties, while Harpo and Chico were performing at the Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE MARX

Interview between Raymond Rohauer and Maxine Marx, the only child of Chico Marx. Miss Marx was closely associated all through her youth with Chico, Groucho, Harpo and Zeppo Marx and has spent considerable time on the set watching them work and devise their gags. Therefore, the following background material which is printed in excerpt form here, will be released in book form in the near future. This recording was made on March 18th, 1967, New York City.

Rohauer: There is one fact that I have been unable to find out. That is how Zeppo acquired his nickname. Can you tell me anything about it?

Maxine: I have been told that during World War I, Minnie Marx my grandmother bought a farm and one day the boys were playing farmer, and my father Chico, called out, "Hi Zep" after Herbert called him "Zeke." After that, Herbert became Zeppo, and apparently it stuck.

Rohauer: Groucho, your uncle, has told me about the team's career in Vaudeville. Can you add anything to his recollections?

Maxine: Well, I can only say that the Marx Bros. in Vaudeville in their early years were very much like the characters they played in their films. They were irrepressible, wild, crazy maniacs with an energy that was so frightening and enormous that W. C. Fields once told me that nobody could walk on stage after they got through. He said that one time when he was to follow the Marx Bros., he feigned a broken arm so that he would not have to follow them. Fields told me that they literally and physically wrecked the theater and added that you had to see it to believe it . . . now remember, that this is when they were in their teens and early twenties. You must realize that they were already in their late thirties and early forties when they started their film careers. This, by that time, was watered down energy, not the energy available to the public during their early Vaudeville years.

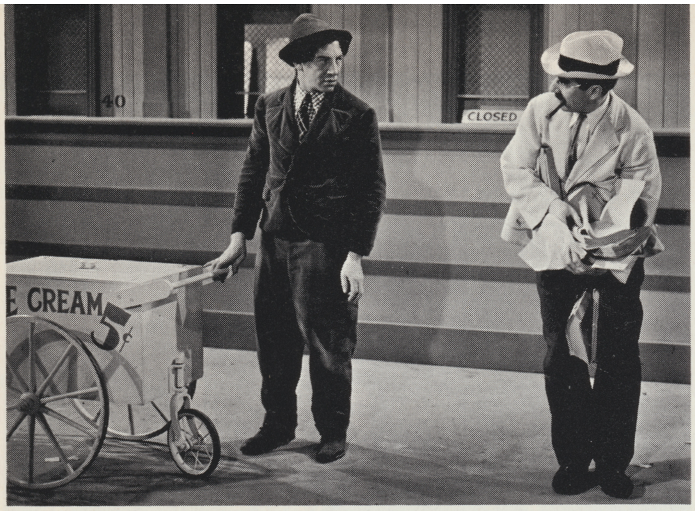
Rohauer: How did they transfer the team aspect to the motion picture medium?

Maxine: Well, there is one thing about their films I have noticed, which I don't know if anyone else has spotted, and that is that Harpo never played a scene just with Groucho. We have what we call "two scenes" and "three scenes" – "two scenes" were Daddy and Groucho, such as the one from **The Cocoanuts** (1929). Groucho is explaining to Chico his plan for developing the Cocoanut district, and he has a map spread out on a table:

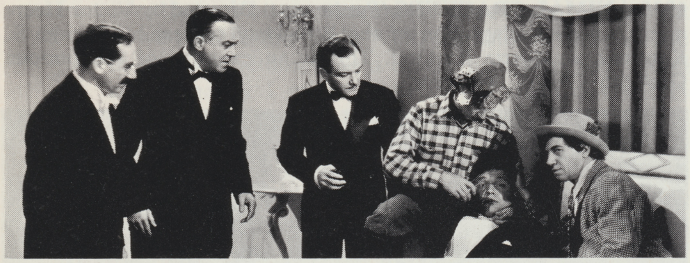
Groucho: Now here is a little peninsula, and here is a viaduct leading over to the mainland.

Chico: Why a duck?

Groucho: I'm all right. How are you? I say here is a little peninsula and here is a viaduct leading to the mainland.



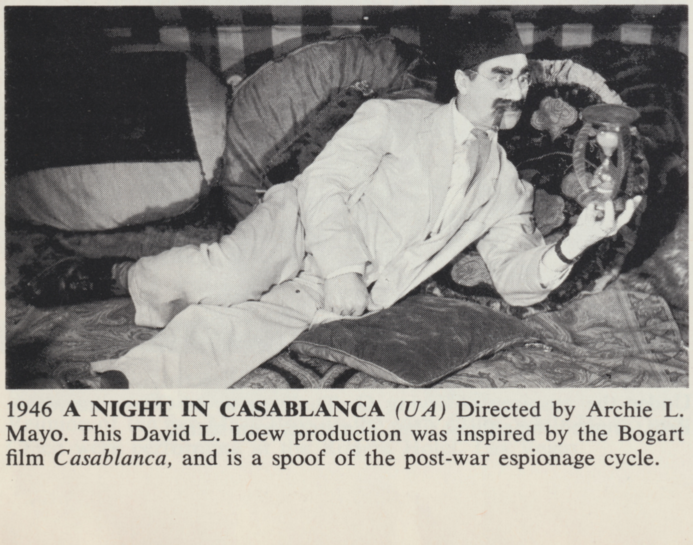
1937 **A DAY AT THE RACES** *(M-G-M)* Directed by Sam Wood. Thalberg died during production. The "tutsi-frutsi-ice-cream" scene, regarded by Chico as his best in any film, with Chico lending a helping hand to the sucker (Groucho).



1938 **ROOM SERVICE** *(R.K.O.)* Directed by William A. Seiter. Morrie Ryskind, who had co-authored The Cocoanuts, Animal Crackers and A Night at the Opera adapted the 1937 Broadway stage success to the screen. Donald MacBride, Cliff Dunstan and Frank Albertson.

PRIVATE DETE

1941 **THE BIG STORE** *(M-G-M)* Directed by Charles Reisner. The opening encounter by Margaret Dumont of Groucho and Harpo in their office is a highlight of the film.



1946 **A NIGHT IN CASABLANCA** *(UA)* Directed by Archie L. Mayo. This David L. Loew production was inspired by the Bogart film *Casablanca,* and is a spoof of the post-war espionage cycle.

Chico: All right, why a duck?

Groucho: I'm not playing ask me another. I say that's a viaduct.

Chico: All right, why a duck? Why a duck, why-a no chicken.

Groucho: Well, I don't know why-a no chicken. I'm a stranger here myself. All I know is that it's a viaduct. You try to cross over there a chicken and you'll find out vy-a-duck.

Chico: When I go some place I just –

Groucho: It's deep water, that's vy-a-duck. Deep Water. Look, look suppose you were out horseback riding and you came to that stream and you wanted to ford over. You couldn't make it, it's too deep.

Chico: What-a you want with a Ford if you get a horse?

Groucho: Well, I'm sorry the matter ever came up. All I know is that it's a viaduct.

Chico: I know. All right, I catch on why a horse, why a chicken, why this, why that. I no catch on why a duck.

Groucho: I was only fooling. I was only fooling. They're going to build a tunnel there in the morning. Now is that clear to you?

Chico: Yes, everything except why a duck.

Groucho: Well, that's fine. Then we can go ahead with this thing.

Maxine: Lines like this are archaic now, but in the 20's they were very funny. At any rate, there were many scenes like that, and many just with Dad and Harpo in which my father would explain Harpo's actions. However, whenever Harpo had to communicate with Groucho, Dad was always in the scene between the both of them. He would soften Groucho's insults to Harpo.

Rohauer: Groucho has said Harpo's wig was blonde. However, I have heard that it was red.

Maxine: On the stage, Harpo wore a red wig, in fact, he became known as the "red head", but when he went to pictures he found that the red wig photographed black. Since he wanted to keep up the impression of it being red, he lightened it. As he kept lightening it, however, people began calling him blondie, once again because of the black and white photography. Had they worked in color he would have had a red wig, but that is how these things happen, and accounts for your conflict of colors.

Rohauer: Now, about Chico. Why did your father adopt his Italian dialect?

Maxine: Vaudeville humor was all based on ethnic types. Some comics were "Dutch", others Jewish, Negro, Italian or Irish. They were all popular. My father chose an Italian dialect.

Rohauer: I never had the occasion to meet your father or speak with him. What was his accent when he was off screen?

Maxine: He was raised in New York and talked New Yorkese. In fact, when my mother would go to see a preview of their films, she would tell my father, "Chico, your accent is slipping." He'd forget himself sometimes and if you pay close attention you can sometimes spot this in their films.

Rohauer: Is it true that your grandmother managed the act from the beginning?

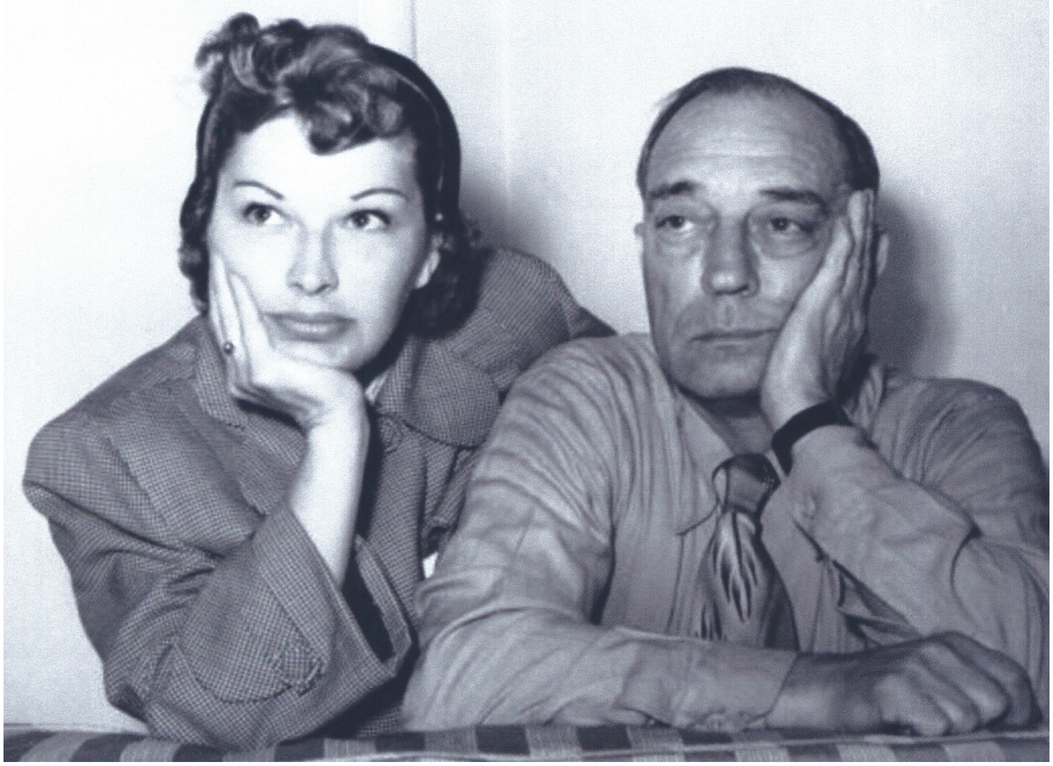
Maxine: Only until father joined the act, then he took over the reins and never relinquished them until after the M-G-M contract. Because he was a compulsive gambler, he had a gambler's vision, and it was his idea to go legitimate, to go into the movies, to go into radio, against some very fierce family opposition at times. Since all questions of policy were solved by a vote of the three eldest brothers, Daddy was always sure he could talk Harpo into his point of view, and he was right. Shortly before he died on October 11, 1961, he said wonderingly to me, "I wonder how Groucho never caught on that I always talked to Harpo last, because I knew that whoever spoke to Harpo last got his vote?" I feel that the love and involvement of the five brothers, including Gummo and Zeppo, for one another, was a rather unique contribution in the history of the American theatre.

Rohauer teamed up with Mr. Chester just as the latter's properties soared in value. Rohauer, who often claimed he came from an impoverished background, found his pot of gold in the form of Mr. Chester. Eventually Rohauer and Mr. Chester sold off most of their real estate by the 1960s when they left Los Angeles and relocated to New York City. Rohauer shrewdly insisted that they retain the mineral rights to the land they sold in California. This paid off in dividends for the rest of their lives. I know this for a fact; Rohauer signed over one of these mineral rights checks when he owed me money for a set of Bell & Howell projectors I purchased on his behalf, along with other expenses he had incurred over the past year.

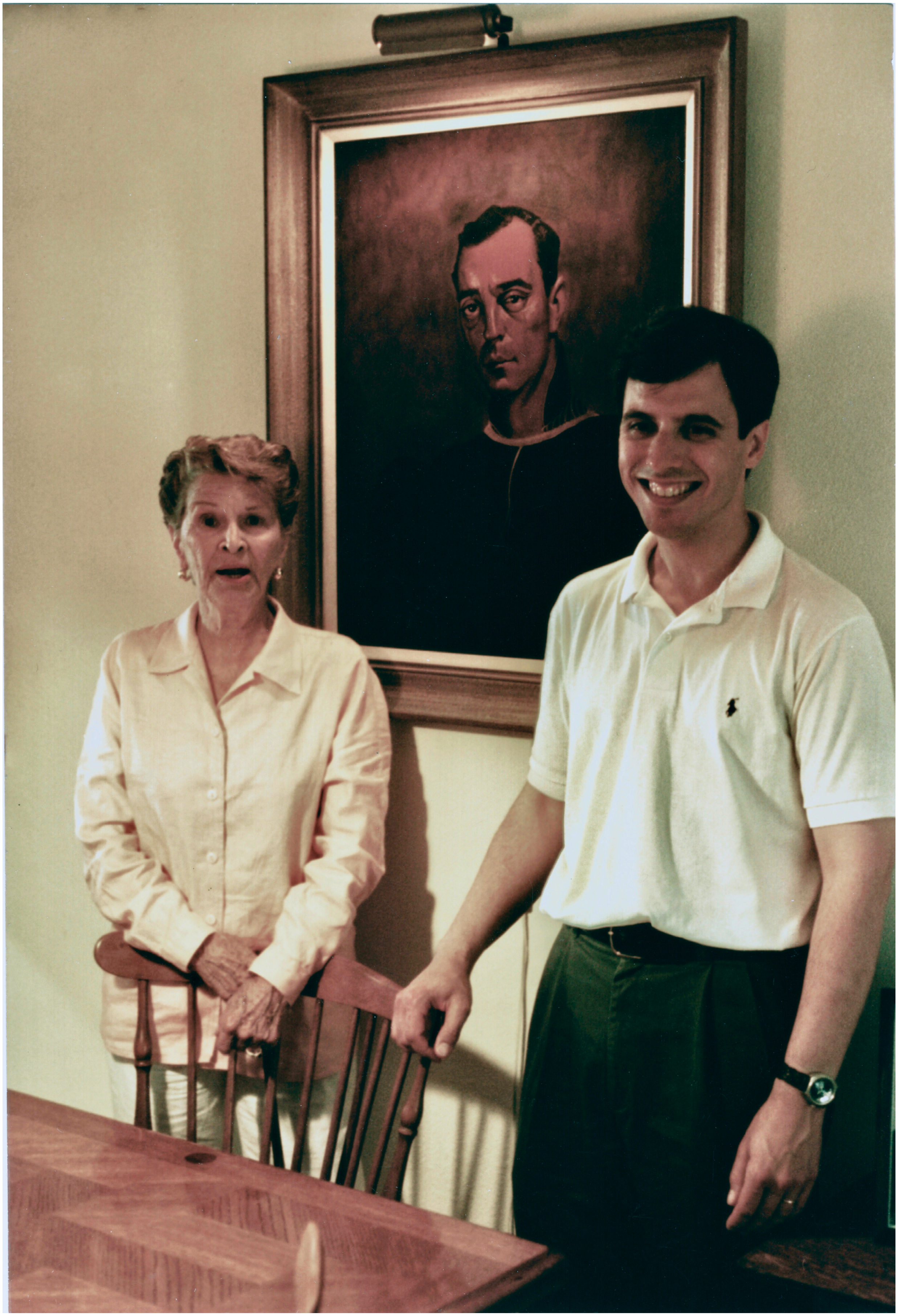
Eleanor Keaton, c. 1940. Courtesy of the International Buster Keaton Society. Color tinted by DBP.

I don't know how much the sale of Rohauer's film collection to Douris netted the Rohauer/Chester estate. But in 2005, the earliest year for which I've seen tax returns, total estate assets were $3,624,623. In 2020 (the last year for which I have figures), the assets amounted to $4,149,926. Investments appear to be conservative; they don't earn a great deal of money but they don't lose money, either. Year after year the estate maintains a stable balance after maintenance fees and a 1% annual charitable contribution are deducted. Contributions in 2020 totaled $41,500 or 1% of its assets.

Let's be as objective as we can. At the current rate of investment returns vs. 1% in annual charitable donations, The Rohauer Collection Foundation stands a good chance of existing well into the next century, if not beyond. Film-related recipients in 2020 included The American Museum



Eleanor and Buster in England for their successful UK stage show, 1951. Rohauer later fabricated a story of this time period, portraying the Keatons as down and out: "No work for years and none ahead." It was Rohauer's way to enhance his own reputation and create the myth that HE alone saved Buster's career.



Eleanor Keaton and Ed Watz beside a reproduction of John Decker's painting of Buster as Hamlet, 1997

Mary Meerson and Buster converse as Rohauer beams appreciatively. Paris, 1962.

of the Moving Image ($2,500); The Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage ($2,500); Film Forum ($4,000); Eastman House ($2,500); and The UCLA Film & Television Archive ($1,500), for a total of $13,000.

There are a number of film institutions and organizations dedicated to film preservation that could benefit from a donation, but there is nothing for MOMA, The San Francisco Film Festival, Cinecon, The Library of Congress, The American Film Institute, or the many FIAF members who surrendered their film holdings when Rohauer came barging into their archives confiscating prints years ago. During his lifetime Rohauer maintained an intense hatred towards the higher-ups in these organizations but that would seem a sad reason to continue this animus. Besides, the film archivists that he hated in his lifetime are also long gone today.

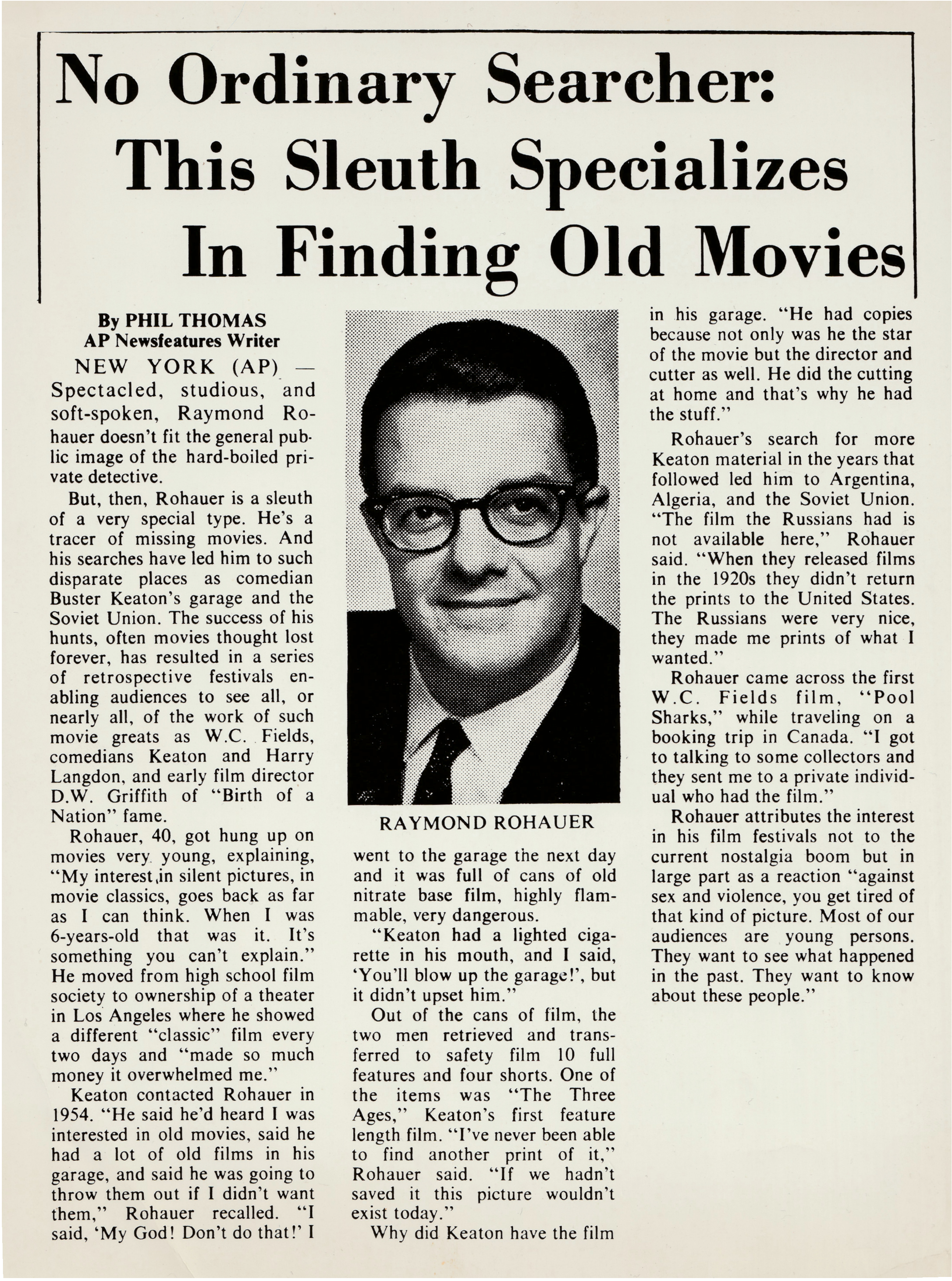
The remaining $28,000 donated to charity in 2020 was divided mostly among worthwhile animal-related organizations that Mr. Chester supported during his lifetime: Bide-a-Wee, Guiding Eyes For The Blind, and Pet Rescue, among others. Mr. Chester was a kind, decent man, and once confided to me that he'd love to own a dog, "if only Raymond wasn't so afraid of them." Eleanor Keaton confirmed for me that Rohauer rarely visited the Keaton home in Woodland Hills because "he was convinced our gentle giant of a dog, who never bit anyone, would surely nip him."

"Did Rohauer leave his relatives any money?"

That is a great question — for which I don't know the answer. I have no idea whether Rohauer's half-brother Kenneth, sister-in-law Helen, or niece Lynn were beneficiaries of his estate. During the four years I worked for him, Rohauer only met these people — to my knowledge his closest, possibly only, living family members — once, despite the fact that they resided in the same state. Beyond this, it's all a private family matter, and we'll have to leave it at that.

"You once said in an online forum that Rohauer kept nitrate in his apartment. Can you elaborate on that?"

Yes indeed. Bonded Services, at the time the major archival storage facility in the Northeast, housed many of Rohauer's nitrate negatives in their Fort Lee, New Jersey, location. During 1980, the last full year that I worked for Rohauer, he suddenly had a short stack of thousand-foot 35mm film cans on the table in his living room. Each can was marked **NITRATE** in bold letters. He explained to me that Bonded Services returned the reels to him because each reel displayed some initial stage of nitrate decomposition. The policy for Bonded was to either junk the damaged footage in accordance with Fire Hazard Safety laws, or, in



No Ordinary Searcher: This Sleuth Specializes In Finding Old Movies

By PHIL THOMAS
AP Newsfeatures Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Spectacled, studious, and soft-spoken, Raymond Rohauer doesn't fit the general public image of the hard-boiled private detective.

But, then, Rohauer is a sleuth of a very special type. He's a tracer of missing movies. And his searches have led him to such disparate places as comedian Buster Keaton's garage and the Soviet Union. The success of his hunts, often movies thought lost forever, has resulted in a series of retrospective festivals enabling audiences to see all, or nearly all, of the work of such movie greats as W.C. Fields, comedians Keaton and Harry Langdon, and early film director D.W. Griffith of "Birth of a Nation" fame.

Rohauer, 40, got hung up on movies very young, explaining, "My interest in silent pictures, in movie classics, goes back as far as I can think. When I was 6-years-old that was it. It's something you can't explain." He moved from high school film society to ownership of a theater in Los Angeles where he showed a different "classic" film every two days and "made so much money it overwhelmed me."

Keaton contacted Rohauer in 1954. "He said he'd heard I was interested in old movies, said he had a lot of old films in his garage, and said he was going to throw them out if I didn't want them," Rohauer recalled. "I said, 'My God! Don't do that!' I went to the garage the next day and it was full of cans of old nitrate base film, highly flammable, very dangerous.

"Keaton had a lighted cigarette in his mouth, and I said, 'You'll blow up the garage!', but it didn't upset him."

Out of the cans of film, the two men retrieved and transferred to safety film 10 full features and four shorts. One of the items was "The Three Ages," Keaton's first feature length film. "I've never been able to find another print of it," Rohauer said. "If we hadn't saved it this picture wouldn't exist today."

Why did Keaton have the film in his garage. "He had copies because not only was he the star of the movie but the director and cutter as well. He did the cutting at home and that's why he had the stuff."

Rohauer's search for more Keaton material in the years that followed led him to Argentina, Algeria, and the Soviet Union. "The film the Russians had is not available here," Rohauer said. "When they released films in the 1920s they didn't return the prints to the United States. The Russians were very nice, they made me prints of what I wanted."

Rohauer came across the first W.C. Fields film, "Pool Sharks," while traveling on a booking trip in Canada. "I got to talking to some collectors and they sent me to a private individual who had the film."

Rohauer attributes the interest in his film festivals not to the current nostalgia boom but in large part as a reaction "against sex and violence, you get tired of that kind of picture. Most of our audiences are young persons. They want to see what happened in the past. They want to know about these people."

RAYMOND ROHAUER

1970 syndicated article where Rohauer lies about his age (he was 46, not 40), partnering with Buster in 1954 (it was actually 5 or 6 years later), having 10 features and 4 shorts all on nitrate stock in his garage (the nitrate was in his vault at The Italian Villa, later given by James Mason to the Motion Picture Academy archives.

Rohauer's case, to deliver the elements to his apartment immediately. One of the cans contained the camera negative to reel five of Harry Langdon's *Three's A Crowd*, another contained the camera negative to reel two of Langdon's *The Chaser.*

Rohauer opened each can and let me examine the negatives, mounted on cores. "Y'see, there's very minimal damage here that a film solution bath would wash away," he told me. "Then the negatives will be as good as new." Whatever chemical preservative treatment the negatives had gone through previously gave them a strong pine tar-like smell. Over the next few months several more nitrate film cans cropped up in the apartment, containing negatives from Joe Schenck productions starring Norma Talmadge (sorry but I never wrote down the titles and can't recall them — you can tell where my priorities were!). On one unforgettable day the camera negative from the first reel of Buster Keaton's *The General* arrived on that table.

With beaming pride, Rohauer grabbed the film core and to my horror, quickly unspooled the film onto the table, using his finger as an axle. It was as though he was rapidly unfurling a spool of yarn. "Here," he said, handing me the core, "Lookit the quality." There was Buster as Johnnie Gray, sitting in the cab of The General, every shot neatly spliced together, the splices possibly done by Buster himself alongside his film cutter back in 1926.

Rohauer pointed out that although the original elements on *The General* were especially well-treated and looked after, the very first shot — the panorama view of the moving train — recently had suffered minor decomposition that was noticeable in the sky portion of each frame. "I'm going to try and get Kevin Brownlow and David Gill to make a new preservation copy of *The General*, now that we're friendly since working on the *Hollywood* series. I'm hoping that Brownlow can get the BBC or maybe Thames Television to foot the bill." Later I learned from Rohauer that Kevin and David did get to see Rohauer's first reel camera negative on *The General*. According to Rohauer, Kevin was awestruck by the quality and told Rohauer, "We've got to preserve the entire film!" And so…they eventually did!

Later Rohauer had the nitrate camera negative to both reels of Keaton's *One Week* brought to his apartment. I asked him how severe the decomposition was on the nitrate. "There is no damage," he said, "But I'm dangling this in front of Kevin Brownlow, it needs to be copied and preserved, just like *The General*." I also got to examine both reels of camera negatives on *One Week,* handling them a lot more carefully than the way that Rohauer examined the 60-year-old Keaton nitrate. Need I add that these experiences were a big thrill for me — inspecting what to me were almost sacred relics. Rohauer watched my reaction. He wanted me to quit my full-time job and be on 24-hour call for him, though not as a formal salaried employee. "I can probably pay up to a hundred dollars a week," he said.

I told him the truth: at age 22 and fresh out of college, I wasn't financially equipped to "afford" his offer! I believe he made that proposal for only one reason: he realized I wasn't happy with the weekly interrogation I was now getting from him, and it was clear I intended to part ways soon. The interrogation, and a gradual mistrust, began because I would never divulge the source of the complete *Convict 13* print that I purchased from Enrique Bouchard. Even though I gave Rohauer the print, which he was thrilled to have, he would ask incessantly, "can't ya just give me the name of the person who gave you *Convict 13*?" Knowing his attitude towards collectors and how badly he treated them, I couldn't stick around Rohauer much longer. Second, there was never any genuine effort to send a Harry Langdon book proposal to one of the major publishers. "We'll do that later," was Rohauer's constant brush-off

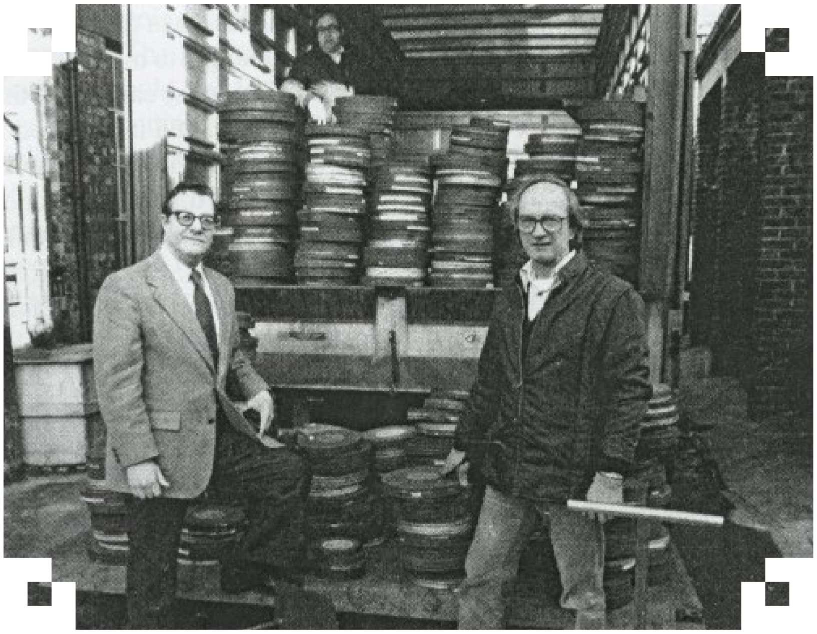
reply. Enough already! After nearly four years of his procrastination, I was out of there by June 1981.

Years later the noted film archivist David Shepard told me that "those nitrate negatives you spoke about that were sitting in Rohauer's apartment were never touched. He never did anything with them. They sat unattended for so long that they had to be destroyed after his death, they were so badly decomposed."

What kind of a relationship did The Keatons have with Rohauer?

While Buster was still alive, the Keatons never spent much time together with Rohauer. There were only three significant Keaton film festivals coordinated by Rohauer in Buster's lifetime: Berlin and Paris (1962) and Venice (1963), however Buster wasn't present at the last one. For the Paris show Rohauer had to partner with Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française. Langlois produced copies of films that Rohauer didn't have in his collection, including *The Butcher Boy*, Buster's first screen appearance. Keaton's great films were suddenly rediscovered but the impact and adulation over the man and his work in the 1960s was strictly limited to Europe. "Anyway," Eleanor told a reporter at the time, "it's better for him [Buster] this way than to be neglected the way he is back in the United States." These early festivals were somewhat small in scope, not including all of the silents that were available.

The first Buster Keaton Film Festivals to feature nearly all of Rohauer's collection were held in London (1969) and New York (1970). Once America rediscovered Buster in his silent years, he was suddenly a hot item and no longer considered another old-time slapstick comic. Now most everyone — from average moviegoers to cinéastes — wanted to see his films and learn more about Buster Keaton. Eleanor gladly picked up the torch on Buster's behalf and we know how she selflessly promoted Buster's legacy. But she also found herself affiliated closer to Rohauer, who needed her participation in lieu of Buster. He wasn't nasty to her, he was respectful, but he was very demanding.


Rohauer with David Gill
and the Chaplin Mutual outtakes

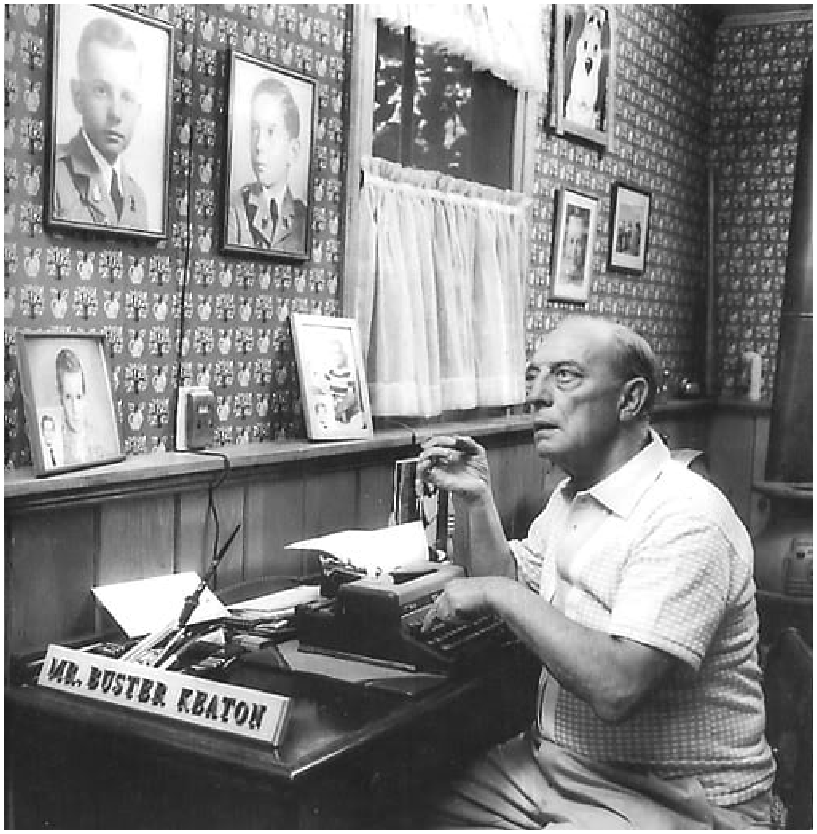
"Raymond would call me up and say, 'we're going to be on the *Merv Griffin Show* tomorrow.' At the drop of a hat he'd expect me to be ready, get my hair fixed, and cancel whatever I was planning to do. He never asked me if it was an imposition."

Rohauer proved himself to be (again, in two-reel comedy jargon) a louse and a weasel towards Eleanor in other ways. I have Tom Dardis' audio interviews from the mid-1970s (before I knew Eleanor) where she complains at length about Rohauer:

"He [Rohauer] brags to people that Buster earned $160,000 from the [Keaton Festival] shows but Buster never got anywhere near that kind of money from him." She considered Rohauer to be "sneaky," and bitterly recalled that after Buster died, "The next time I saw Raymond he had me sign this document, telling me it was important since now I was his partner.

"I signed it, should've read it but I didn't, and he gave me a dollar, which he said made this a valid agreement. He knew some law that said by giving me the dollar, this was now a transaction between us. A few weeks later I got this registered letter in the mail from Raymond's attorney in Washington, saying that I agreed in the papers I signed that my share in the profits from Buster's films was reduced from 50% to 10%. I was plenty sore at Raymond, if he needed the money for the work he was doing, he could've explained it to me. He didn't need to be so deceitful about it."

I heard Rohauer give Eleanor a stern lecture over a long-distance phone call in August 1979, after he received a copy of Tom Dardis' book *Keaton, The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down*. Rohauer claimed he had no idea that Eleanor spoke with Dardis, and demanded she divulge whatever she had shared with him. In the book's acknowledgements, Eleanor and Buster's sister Louise are thanked in the first line for being "extraordinarily generous" with their time in answering the author's questions about Buster.



The "illiterate" Buster Keaton
at his oft-used typewriter.

Rohauer wasn't consulted for the book. Listening to Dardis' other taped interviews with Buster's old friend and frequent costar Harold Goodwin and Buster's agent Ben Pearson, I can understand Dardis' reluctance to interview Rohauer. No doubt Tom Dardis was intimidated by what they told him about this megalomaniac movie mogul. Very little of Eleanor's interview was used by Dardis in his book. Some of the stories Eleanor related are pure gold, including an MGM feature that Buster virtually codirected without credit! These anecdotes are included in my Keaton book, coming out in the near future.

Frankly, *The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down* did a lasting disservice to Keaton's legacy. The best material Dardis collected wasn't used because it didn't fit his preconceived narrative about an alcoholic whose greatest masterpiece, *The General*, was a critical and commercial failure. This fanciful myth, based upon sloppy and incomplete research, persisted for some forty years until the International Buster Keaton Society set the record straight in *The Keaton Chronicle*.

I didn't meet Eleanor until 1981, at Bill Cox's house. When I told her that I used to work for Rohauer, she asked me to please not tell him that we met: "He doesn't want me to speak to anyone about Buster!" Until then Eleanor had come across to me as a strong-willed, formidable person. Which indeed she was. But mentioning that I had been an employee of Rohauer's initially frightened her. I assured her I was no longer affiliated with him; I told her that I had quit. "Good for you!" she replied. "I'm sort of stuck with him when he comes to town or mails me a plane ticket to meet him at some Buster event. But I don't need him lecturing me like he was my father! Him, of all people!"

What especially bothered Eleanor about Rohauer was the false picture he painted of Keaton the man. As I got to know her better through the years, she became more outspoken, especially after Rohauer died in 1987. "When Buster passed away Raymond straight up began telling lies. He'd tell interviewers that Buster couldn't write and was probably illiterate.

"He told that to Kevin Brownlow [in 1986] when Kevin was making his documentary on Buster. Kevin didn't believe any of it, he didn't use any of it, but when Marion Meade wrote her awful book (*Buster Keaton: Cut to the Chase*) she played all these recordings and believed Raymond's nonsense. She didn't contact me about any of this, I only found out when I started reading the book, got to that page, and threw it on the floor! It stayed there until someone came over and picked it up but I wasn't going to touch that piece of… garbage — which is NOT the word I'm thinking of!"

In 1970 Rohauer was the guest on a half hour program devoted to Buster's comedy genius entitled *The Metaphysics of Buster Keaton*. This low-keyed and loquacious "tribute" seemed more like a funeral memorial than a celebration. Fuzzy, dupey clips were shown as Rohauer was given the floor to pontificate and expand upon his self-bragging rights. Perhaps because he knew he was telling a lie, Rohauer nervously told film critic Andrew Sarris that "Buster Keaton was down on his luck at this time, as was [sic] this happened many times in his career.

And Buster Keaton was living with his mother because he had no other place to live."

Around the same time Rohauer elaborated on this in print for reporter Frances Taylor: "Keaton was broke by then. No work for years and none ahead. In his plush years he had bought his mother a home. Now he and his wife were living there with his mother."

"Nothing could be further from the truth!" Eleanor told me. "Raymond never even met Myra [Buster's mother]. She passed away in 1955, years before we met him. All that talk about him coming over to the house in 1954 is nonsense. And we didn't have *Three Ages* and all those other films in the garage. In the heat of the summer, when it can reach 104 degrees in Los Angeles, and in an uninsulated garage, all that old nitrate would've blown up! Those films came from the vault at The Italian Villa. James Mason gave the film he found in the vault to the [Motion Picture] Academy. It was more like 1959 or 1960 when Raymond came buzzing around. Everything Raymond learned about Buster before we met, he learned by reading *My Wonderful World of Slapstick*, and later on, from reading Rudi Blesh's book."

"Raymond also told some interviewer that Buster never understood why people found him funny. Now if that isn't the most ridiculous thing to say — because for 20 years Buster grew up in front of a live audience in vaudeville; he knew exactly why he was funny. I could've throttled Raymond when he said that!"

Eleanor's attitude towards Rohauer eventually softened somewhat by the mid-1980s. She knew that despite his lies and double-dealing, RR had presented Buster Keaton in his prime to a worldwide audience that rediscovered and embraced him. For that she was very grateful indeed.

What did Rohauer think about the home video revolution that began in the late 1970s with Betamax and VHS players?

I can almost pinpoint the moment I saw Rohauer begin to panic over home video recorders. It was January 1980, and Rohauer, Mr. Chester and myself were visiting the home of Chris Economakis, Rohauer's professional photographer who was always there in an instant when The Boss needed him. Chris had a huge home in the most upscale section (possibly the only upscale section) of The Bronx. You traversed through a narrow bridge with a security guard at the entrance to his neighborhood. He was a kind and gregarious man, and we joined his family for a Sunday dinner before examining file cabinets in his basement that were full of stills and negatives.

Afterwards Chris invited us into the den. "Hey Ray," he said to Rohauer, "you want to see something interesting? Take a look at this — " Chris turned on his television set and video cassette machine simultaneously. "Home Box Office Presents Eddie Cantor in *Whoopee*" came on the screen. For the next 90 minutes Mr. Chester and I watched and enjoyed the film, which neither of us had seen before. In the meantime, Rohauer stared at the screen, only occasionally making comments directed at Chris. "Where'd you get this?" he asked. "I got it off the TV," Chris replied. Rohauer said that he thought "the cable company blocked video players from being able to record TV shows." Chris answered, "Why would they do that? Then there's no sense to have a video recorder." "Yeah, you're right," Rohauer replied.

On the ride back to Manhattan Rohauer kept talking about VCRs. I wondered how he couldn't have realized that these machines were capable of recording shows off the TV. He reminded me of Hollywood's studio heads in the late 1920s who dismissed the talkies as just a fad. "Well, that settles it," he told Mr. Chester and myself. "I'm never going to permit anyone to sell video cassettes of my films! Everybody'll still have to go to the theater if they want to see them!"

A few months later I went to a Nostalgia Collector's Show in Secaucus, New Jersey. There on a dealer's table were videotape copies of the Buster Keaton silent shorts, bootlegged of course. But the one being shown on a small TV set (*Neighbors*) looked pretty good to me. I never told Rohauer about this, he'd have to learn about this new means of "sharing" Buster Keaton on his own. If you don't give the public what they want, sometimes they'll use their own initiative to get it!

* * *

Ed Watz is the author of Wheeler & Woolsey *and coauthor of* The Columbia Comedy Shorts, *in addition to articles for* Comique *and other publications. His latest book* The Right To Remain Silent: Buster Keaton in The Talkies *is due to be released by Bear Manor Media in the near future.*

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Louise with Pepper the Cat

LOUISE FAZENDA

The Forgotten Queen of Slapstick

By Lea Stans

The silent era abounded with talented comediennes who often had their own unique specialties. Some, like Marie Prevost and Phylis Haver, played flappers or ingenues. Others, like Dot Farley and Marie Dressler, cheerfully played "character" roles. Polly Moran excelled at devil-may-care slapstick, and Mabel Normand often played country girls and other "rustic" types.

But there was one frequently-overlooked comedienne who was arguably talented at all of the above, and that was Louise Fazenda. A veteran of dozens of Joker Comedies and Keystone films, she was always willing to do pratfalls, dress up in unflattering bumpkin costumes, fall from telephone poles, get dragged through puddles—whatever was needed in the pursuit of laughs. The skills of this fearless, good-natured actress stayed in demand throughout the '20s and '30s until she decided to gracefully exit her career and devote herself to her true passion: charity work, which she did quietly and without seeking accolades.

She was born on June 17, 1896 (although many sources at the time would list her birth year as 1895) in Lafayette, Indiana, the only child of her parents Joseph and Nelda Fazenda. Since Nelda was 39 at the time of Louise's birth, the infant was likely a happy surprise. Her ancestry was Dutch, Italian, French, and Portuguese, and she would retain her ethnic-sounding surname for her entire screen career. The little family moved to southern California when Louise was still a baby and Joseph opened a small grocery store close to their home on the former outskirts of downtown Los Angeles.

She would recall having a modest, loving upbringing and learning how to earn her own spending money at a young age. Displaying a knack for entrepreneurship that would last throughout her life, Fazenda would deliver groceries for her father in a horse-drawn wagon, wash dishes, sell homemade jams, babysit for her neighbors, and work as one of the few girl "newsies" at the time. By her mid-teens she had an ambition to become a teacher, but when her father's business suddenly folded, she put aside that dream and focused on helping support her parents.

Her experience appearing in high school plays probably gave Fazenda the idea to work at least occasionally in dramatic stock companies, supporting actresses Virginia Brissac and Miss Lucretia Del Valle. She also tried various odd jobs before a friend convinced her to try out a growing industry right on her doorstep: motion pictures. Her first film is a bit difficult to determine, but some sources agree she appeared as an extra in Universal's *The Romance of the Utah Pioneers* (1913). After realizing she could make $2-$5 dollars a day working in films — depending on the role — she was sold.

Fascinated by the excitement of motion picture making, Fazenda took to her new job quickly and didn't mind the long hours and unglamorous working conditions. While the 5'4", hazel-eyed teen was attractive and could've easily played a series of fashionable ingenues, she was just as happy to play country rubes or clumsy maids. Most importantly, she also wasn't afraid to do the kinds of crazy stunts that most performers balked at, whether they involved dropping from dizzying heights or leaping from trains.

Fazenda was soon rewarded for her daring by being added to the ensemble cast of Universal's Joker Comedies unit, alongside comedians like Max Asher, Harry McCoy, Gale Henry and Bobby Vernon. Much like their Keystone rivals, these one-reel shorts were heavy on frenetic slapstick and absurd situations. They might be set in the wild west one day and at a beachside hotel the next, and Fazenda quickly learned to have a variety of costume and makeup options on hand for whatever whim the director might have that day. Many of these shorts were part of a series starring Asher and McCoy with titles like *Mike and Jake at the Beach* (1913) and *Mike and Jake Go in for Matrimony* (1914). Fazenda might play a maid, a working girl, a farmer's daughter, a harried wife, or an occasional oddball role like a cannibal queen or a painting of an Egyptian princess come to life — the silent comedy imagination had no limits.

It's a Boy (1920) with Billy Bevan

In early 1915 Fazenda moved to Keystone, the gold standard of slapstick studios. At the time Sennett's top stars included Roscoe Arbuckle, Mabel Normand, Syd Chaplin and Mack Swain, and there was definitely room for more leading ladies. Fazenda's ostensible first Keystone was *Willful Ambrose* (1915), where she played a shrewish wife with wildly bushy eyebrows. But her real first Keystone was *Ambrose's Sour Grapes* (1915), which was filmed first and released later. She had gamely played a small part that might be labeled "Girl in Park Who is Shot in Rear."

It was at Keystone where Fazenda began to specialize in "naive but well-meaning country bumpkin" roles, devising her own distinct costume of clunky worn shoes and a gingham dress (usually with tiered ruffles on the skirt) with her hair pulled up into two tightly-wound pigtails. The visual cherry on top was a spit curl in the middle of her forehead, and soon she also added small bunches of curls at her temples. This became her trademark look in many of her silent comedies, as familiar as Harold Lloyd's glasses or Ben Turpin's crossed eyes.

In the mid-1910s many of Sennett's popular actors had screen nicknames — Swain was "Ambrose," Arbuckle was "Fatty," and so on — and since Fazenda was gaining fans she was dubbed "Maggie" and given her own series, starting with *Maggie's First False Step* (1917). Frequent co-stars included Slim Summerville, Charlie Murray, Billy Bevan, Billy Armstrong, and Glen Cavender. While she still popped up as a supporting actress in other Sennett films, in her starring roles she frequently appeared as a maid or a "kitchen slavey," deftly performing various gags with her precise comic timing and strong pantomime skills. She demonstrated impressive pratfalls in films like *The Village Chestnut* (1918) and performed stunts like clinging to the top of a racing hansom cab in *The Feathered Nest* (1916).

Many of Fazenda's Keystones followed a formula: a put-upon working girl is rejected by the rascally man she fancies, but he changes his tune upon discovering she's the heir to a fortune. Shorts such as *The Kitchen Lady* (1918) added romantic rivalries for her hand, and others like *Are Waitresses Safe?* (1917) emphasized her character's awkward struggles to "make good," whether as a cook at a boarding house or a servant at a swanky mansion. Critics appreciated her comic skills and touches of wistfulness she often brought to her roles, keeping the audience squarely on her side whenever she was deceived by a city slicker or laughed at by the snobby upper crust. In later Sennett shorts she was often co-starred with Teddy the dog and Pepper the cat as well as little blonde-haired John Henry Jr. as the "Baby." Unlike some actors, she was a good sport about having babies and cute animals share her spotlight.

LOUISE FAZENDA
(PHILOMENE)
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When Fazenda's contract with Sennett ended in 1920, she wound up in a few Punch Comedies for the California Producers Corporation and also appeared in vaudeville. After a brief return to Sennett, she starred in several high-energy Mermaid Comedies before settling into a steady career of supporting roles in a number of 1920s features. She played a glamorous chorus girl in *The Gold Diggers* (1923), an easily-startled maid in *The Bat* (1926), a Dutch girl in Marion Davies' *The Red Mill* (1927), and a German beer hall waitress in *Riley the Cop* (1928). She gamely supported Rin Tin Tin in *The Lighthouse by the Sea* (1924), and in the late 1920s co-starred with Cyde Cook in a series of features like *Five and Ten Cent Annie* (1928).

Also during this period, Fazenda's fans were surprised to learn she had been secretly married to former Sennett director Noel M. Smith since 1917. She was likely supposed to appear single to the public, not an uncommon practice at the time. The two had separated in 1923 and formally divorced in 1926. In 1927 she married a man named who was working in Warner Bros' publicity department. While her family initially thought the well-off Fazenda was marrying "down," Hal B. Wallis would quickly climb the career ladder and become one of Hollywood's most well-known producers, overseeing classics like *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Maltese Falcon*

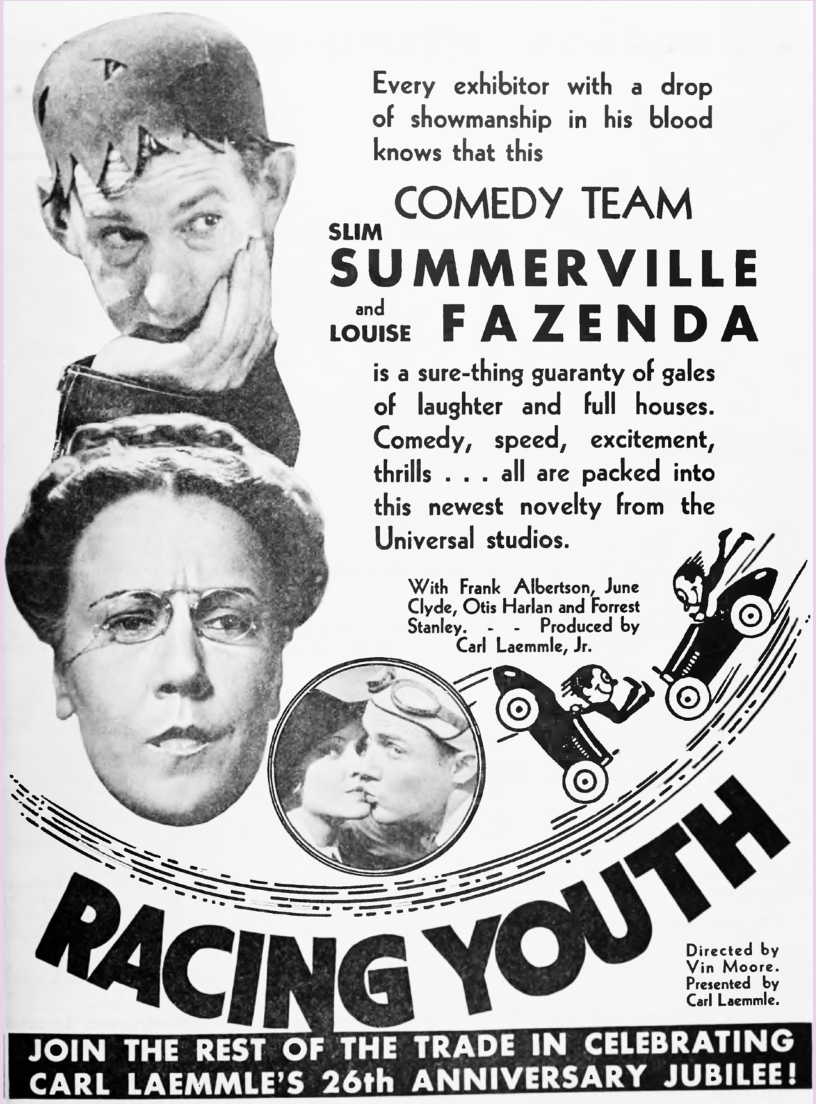
(1941) and *Casablanca* (1942). They would also remain married until Fazenda's death.

In 1933 the couple had their first and only child, Brent. Fazenda, a devout Christian, had made pilgrimages to Lourdes, France and the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré in Quebec and considered little Brent an answer to her prayers She continued appearing in character roles throughout the '30s — her transition to talkies had been a breeze — but was content to take her time and enjoy her home life. By this time, she was often playing daffy aunts or old maids, along with unusual roles like the lady wrestler Sadie in *Swing Your Lady* (1938). After appearing in a small role in the Bette Davis picture *The Old Maid* (1939), Fazenda decided to retire from films. She retired a considerably wealthy woman, thanks to her years of wise money management and smart business investments.

But while she stayed out of the spotlight after 1939, Fazenda devoted herself to a full and busy life of "being friendly to people," as she put it. It was only after her death from a brain hemorrhage in 1962 that many of the stories of her good deeds came to light, from fostering two children during WWII to paying bills for down-on-their-luck folks she read about in the newspapers. The staff of the UCLA Medical Center recalled her frequently visiting sick children, helping to feed them and singing them to sleep. She spent hours with children who had terminal cases of leukemia, helping make their final days as pleasant as possible. Writer Eddie Bunker recalled that Fazenda was the main benefactor for the McKinley Home For Boys, and also credited her with giving him his first typewriter. She helped poor people find homes, assisted unwed pregnant girls, and visited elderly people at their homes. One Fazenda quote offers a clue to her boundless generosity: "[My parents] believed that you must always give away part of what you earned, no matter how little. Because it was pleasing to God."

She's a lesser-known figure in film history today, but happily a good percentage of Louise Fazenda's work is available. Little of her Joker comedies survive, but a number of her Sennett films are in circulation along with a decent collection of her 1920s-30s work. As a talented, overlooked comedienne, and certainly as an example of selfless philanthropy, she certainly deserves to be remembered.

Lea Stans is a historian from Minnesota who runs the silent film blog Silent-ology. She has written for "The Keaton Chronicle," the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, and contributed a chapter to the book CHASE! A Tribute to the Keystone Cops.



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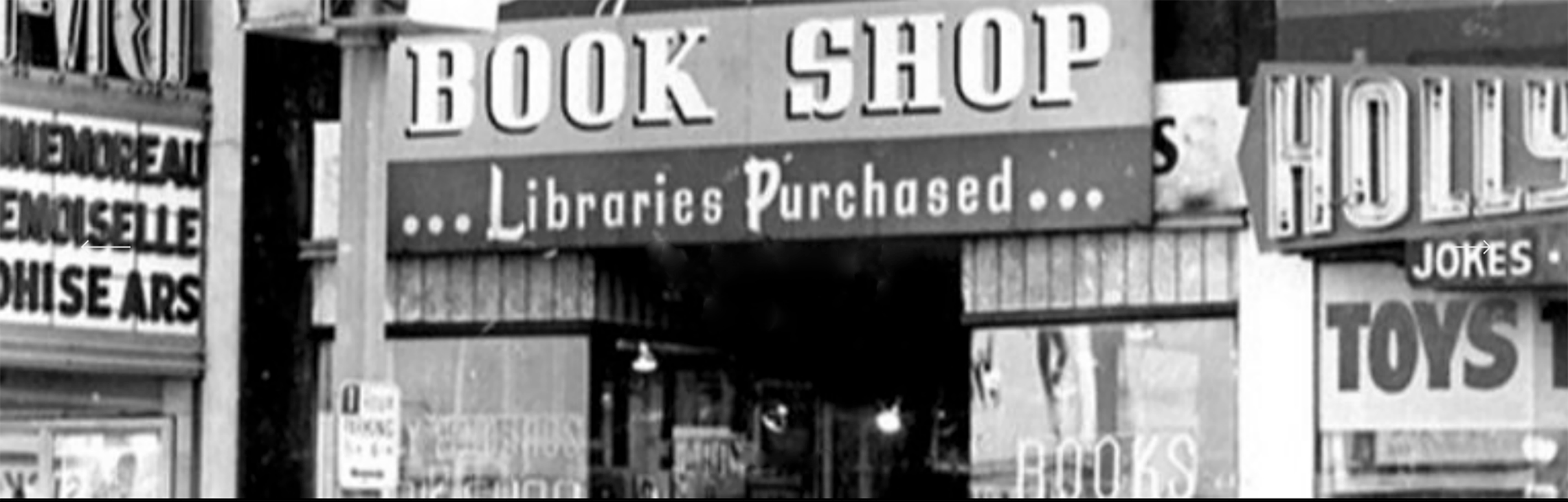
TE I SAVOIA
ENOVA

Louise with husband Hal on ship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What's a Stooge?
TED HEALY TELLS YOU!

This is Ted Healy. You can tell him by his hat. The three lads who are practically in his hair are his "stooges." Between them, they have brought a brand-new kind of clowning to films!

By ROBERT FENDER

TED HEALY, the man who made the United States stooge-conscious, had just finished a scene with Robert Montgomery in a picture when I cornered him. I had been hanging around some time, waiting to get the answer to "What is a stooge?" So when I sprang it on him he replied:

"A stooge is a *****! ///// ---- #### !!!!!——"

"*Wait* a minute, Ted," I soft-pedaled. "We can't print that. Give me a definition I can use in the magazine!"

Ted scratched his head. "It's going to be tough to give you a definition of a stooge in decent language," he pleaded, "but here's a go. A stooge is a guy who never has a light for a cigarette he is trying to borrow.

"A stooge is something that's there when you look around. It's a sort of something—something awful." He shuddered. "Something really awful, like *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde* without the *Dr. Jekyll*. A stooge is two helpings of awful. A stooge is something that, when you dream about it, you have to get up and turn on the lights.

"All of us," Ted continued, "have a little stooge in us. If our Mr. Mayer and President Roosevelt are walking down the street, one of them's a stooge, but if Mr. Mayer reads this, I'm only joking."

"What do you call your stooges?"

"I call 'em N. R. A. because, like prosperity, they're always around the corner when I want 'em. But my stooges ought to get along fine in Hollywood. They have lots of company. This is Stooge Center here, the land where all good little stooges go. If," he added, "they're real, real good or bad. All my stooges have to do here is keep real quiet and pretty soon they'll all be supervisors."

"Where," I asked, "did you find your stooges?"

"I found them under loose boards and outside the city limits. When I came across them, they were trying to find their way, but they had forgotten which way they were looking for. They'd been there for days and days. They wanted to go North so we compromised and I brought them South. Now wherever I go, they go too. It's terrible.

"But Jean Harlow thinks they've got a big future here. She liked 'em the first time she tripped over them. She was feeling sorry for herself that day, but since she met them and saw how low human life can fall, she's been a new gal. Well, anyway, that's what she says.

"But bad as they are," Ted went on, "they aren't so terrible for the money they get."

"What do you pay them?" I asked.

"Nothing," Ted snapped. "Nothing, that is, in actual money. I pay them in vegetables."

At this moment Red Pearson, one of his stooges, popped his head in the open window. "You're supposed to say, 'What kind of vegetables?'" Red piped, "and Ted will answer, just a small celery. He thinks that's a joke, the dog." Ted threw something at Red and the head at the window disappeared.

"That," Ted lamented, "is the kind of thing I have to put up with from those lugs. And they haven't been the same since Jean made the mistake of telling them they had stooge-appeal."

"What's stooge-appeal?" I thought I had floored him with that one.

But he cracked right back and said "It's a sort of cross between Ramon Novarro and an egg sandwich."

"What do they do with their spare time?" I asked.

"They go to the library and tear pages out of books. They started with picture books, but now they've gone high-brow and rip up the classics. Then on second Thursdays they take turns thinking. But they don't strain themselves. They just think of easy things like what day it is and what they'd do it they had sixty cents. By that time they're worn out so they go home and play with their pigeons."

Jerry Howard, one of his stooges, popped his head out of the fireplace. "You're supposed to ask, 'What kind of pigeons?'" He chirped, and then Ted can come back with 'Stooge Pigeons, of course.'" Ted took time out to light the fire and Howard went up in smoke.

Ted Crashes In

"Let's talk talk about you, awhile, Ted. Come clean and tell me—how did you get into pictures?"

"I don't exactly remember," Ted answered. "The stooges and I were out walking and a door as open and we just walked in and kept walking. I met an executive and he said, 'What are you doing here?' and I said, "I'll bite, what are you doing here?' And he couldn't answer that one. He said he used to know, but that had been years ago. 'But,' he said, 'I have the nicest office. Ever see my office? I told him I hadn't, so the stooges and I went to his office and stayed there four months. Best office I ever slept in. The only noise was on Saturdays when the executive went out to get his check.

"But one day I made a mistake. I left the office with the stooges and took a walk around the studio. A director discovered us and the first thing we knew, they stuck us into 'Hollywood Party,' 'Bombshell,' 'Dancing Lady,' 'Fugitive Lovers,' 'Meet The Baron,' and 'Nertsery Rhymes' and a half-dozen other shorts. Now, I live in a fine house with carpets and windows and doors and everything. And my stooges, Moe Howard, Larry Fine, Jerry Howard, Bonny and Red Pearson all live in other houses as far from mine as I could find them. And that's about all I know—or care to know—about stooges."

How a Stooge Works

But before he finished, Ted became serious enough to tell me that a stooge, after all, isn't such a bad guy to be around. His job, unless you already know, is to confuse and harass the comedian with whom he works. Ted's stooges spoil his best jokes by giving away the point. They say the wrong things at the wrong time.

They lie in wait for him on the set or stage and just as he's going well, hop in and "crab" his act. They may do it by starting a song, a juggling act, or by telling silly riddles. Thus the attention that should go to Ted is diverted and he loses his audience. It's then up to Ted to jump on them, have sand-bags dropped on their heads and otherwise get them out of the way. But if they're good stooges (like Ted's) they come right back for more, giving Ted not a moment's peace. The results are always good for belly laughs. Audiences howl at Ted and the trouble he has with the flies in his ointment.

Ted and his stooges have been vaudeville and musical-comedy headliners for the past fifteen years. New York idolizes them for their buffoonery in Earl Carroll's "Vanities" of 1927, "Passing Show," "Night in Venice," "Night in Spain," "The Gang's All Here" and Billy Rose's "Crazy Quilt." Phil Baker had his stooge in the last show, too, but Ted said he could never figure out which one was the stooge.

"Every actor out here ought to have a stooge," Ted philosophized. "They're very handy guys to have around. If a star's too busy to give an interview, he can send his stooge. And a stooge is a swell alibi. If a star's wife or girl-friend says she saw him in Sardi's with another doll, he can always say, 'It must have been my stooge. I was home with the mumps, or a bad toothache or something.'

"And then a stooge always comes in handy when you feel like throwing something at somebody. Whenever I'm in doubt or feel mixed up, I always hit the nearest stooge. Makes me feel better. Nothing like it. Hollywood's tired of 'yes-men.' That's why the stooge is coming into his own out here. A stooge is a 'guess-man.' You can never guess what he's going to do next. But some stooges act queerly before the camera the first time," went on Ted, tilting his battered hat farther back on his head.

"What seems to be the matter with them?" I asked.

"I guess," Ted concluded, "it's just—"

"He guesses," chirped the stooges, who were poking their heads in the transom, "he guesses it's just a case of stooge-fright. That," they piped, just before Ted hit them with a set of andirons, "is one of Mr. Healy's very funny jokes."

I escaped during the fight that ensued, not knowing which were the goofiest, Ted Healy's stooges or Ted. The only thing I was sure of was that Healy and his gang have invaded Hollywood with the freshest brand of humor ever seen in these wastelands.

Originally printed in Movie Classic, March 1934, pp. 51, 63, and 65.

THE WORLD FLIGHT
HANG
NO 4
Keep your tail up
GOOD F

Deleted footage from *Plane Nuts* (1933)

Did you join, Mortimer?
"Mmhmm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Mmhmm. Yup."

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TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES

Lloyd V. Hamilton:

Silent Comedy's Poor Soul

by Richard M. Roberts

Introduction:

I have always been rather proud of this article, which was the first comprehensive career history and critical piece on Lloyd Hamilton published, first in the May-October 1992 number 44/45 issue of *Griffithiana*, the publication of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* in conjunction with the Festival's 1991 retrospective on Lloyd Hamilton. It was also later republished in two issues of *Classic Images*, number 216 and 217, in 1994. This and the Hamilton Filmography were one of the earliest research collaborations with my good friends and fellow Silent Comedy Mafiosi Rob Farr and Joe Moore, and it was while researching this that I did much work with and became good friends with Sam Gill, whom I had met years earlier but really got to know when I went to the Motion Picture Academy's Margaret Herrick Library, where Sam was a curator and preservationist at the time, to research Hamilton and he chided me (as he did with so many others who came in to research any comedians or filmmakers he also loved) that "there really should be an article or book written on this". Little did you know Sam, what webs of which you started the weaving.

So I dedicate this to Sam Gill, much of this really is your fault.

It was a pleasure to revisit and revise this piece, even though I had amassed a pretty good-sized collection of Lloyd Hamilton films by the time I wrote the original version of this article, I've added many more to those stacks in the vaults over the ensuing years, and new information dredged, so there was that much more to add to the article. Someday, this will be a part (as will the Lupino Lane article in the last issue of *Comique*) of Volume Two of my magnum trilogy, *Past Humor, Present Laughter*……….I guess, or perhaps these articles will just add up in these issues of *Comique*, time will only tell, so grab `em while they're here, writing and publishing books is such a pain in the ass, and certainly not my favorite way to pass the time.

— Richard M. Roberts

I first discovered him thanks to Herb Graff's public television program on Silent Comedy in the 1970's. Even then, I was a little bemused by an episode devoted to the man, couched in between tributes to the immortals like Chaplin and Keaton or the obscure like Buster Brown and Billy Franey. I knew the name, but the image associated with that of a tall behemoth, sporting an oversize, Chester Conklin mustache partnered, a la Mutt and Jeff, with a distinctively diminutive fellow named Bud. What I'd seen was undistinguished, Keystone style slapstick, nothing more. I wondered why Mr. Graff and his guest (Walter Kerr, no less) would devote an hour to that sort of humor.

The show opened with *Move Along*, I had my answer.

You may have heard of that magic little comedy in which Lloyd Hamilton hails a streetcar to tie his shoe. Walter Kerr uses in his book, *The Silent Clowns,* as his example of the quintessential fantasy of silent

Fox Studios (Little Ferry, New Jersey) nitrate vault fire, July 9, 1937,
where much of Lloyd Hamilton's best work went up in flames.

film comedy. As Lloyd moves along the street, menaced by an ever present cop telling him to do so, he stops to tie his show on a wooden crate; it collapses. He moves to an ash can, and is delayed by a passers by come between him and it. The route finally clear, he lifts his foot just as a garbage man takes the can away,

Lloyd next comes upon an old gentleman, kneeling in front of a woman to clean her shoe. Finding no other options, Hamilton uses the man as a footstool, leaving a big, white footprint on the old man's back. He is chased away.

Even a water wagon offers no help, turning its spray on him just as he is in position. Finally, in frustration, he marches to the middle of the street and hails a streetcar; it stops, he rests his foot upon it, ties his shoe, and cavalierly waves it away.

This was a Lloyd Hamilton I'd never seen before; a clean shaven, overgrown boy with a checkered cap, swishy walk, and delicate fingers, capable of much subtlety. Later in the film, desperately hungry, he daintily peels, dips, and eats a rose as if it were an artichoke, slowly savoring each imaginary mouthful; a truly original and poignant gag.

In the 1920's Hamilton earned the respect and admiration of his fellow comedians for inventing a character that borrowed from no one. Hamilton himself described the character as "shabby gentile", a bizarre fellow as immutable and unexplained as Harry Langdon, who's existence pushed the envelope of fantasy in silent comedy. Yet not twenty years after his death , Lloyd Hamilton was so forgotten that when Jackie Gleason resurrected a carbon copy of the character called "The Poor Soul", there was no comment.

Who was Lloyd Hamilton? After my initial taste, I was hooked, intrigued, and determined to seek him out. Over the last fifteen years, I gradually encountered this frustrating enigma; a man so dogged by his own bad luck as if to be cursed.

Bad luck: Lloyd Hamilton appeared in over two hundred films, in which less than a third is known to exist today. Those that do are so hard to come by that when a major international film festival attempted a retrospective on him in the centenary of his birth, it had great difficulty representing the man. Of a career that spanned some twenty years and a reputation that placed Lloyd Hamilton as a potential candidate among the great clowns, the evidence is very fragmentary.

Bad luck: In terms of his work, Hamilton had the bad luck to make most of his films for three studios almost legendary for their lack of preservation: Kalem, Fox and Educational. A fire in the latter studio's vaults destroyed the

Dad's Allowance (1914) Frontier Comedy with Lloyd Hamilton and May Cruze

negatives to his major films before he was ten years dead.

Bad luck: In his life and memory. Lloyd Hamilton came so close to reaching the top, but was hit with every hardship one could imagine, some of it his own fault, some not. Hamilton finds himself unfairly lumped with the numerous work-a-day comics of the silent era, briefly mentioned if at all. He deserves better, he was more than that, much more, if only the proof was available for examination.

And yet, if one looks very hard, there is much to be seen.

Lloyd Vernon Hamilton was born August 19th, 1891 to an upper middle-class Oakland, California family. His father was somewhat disgruntled by his son's yen for the actor's life. Hamilton frequently told the story of his backyard staging of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde after seeing Richard Masefield's touring production at the age of eleven. Young Master Hamilton then got involved in professional theater while still at Oakland Polytechnic High School when he scored a job as an extra in productions at Ye Liberty Theater in Oakland, keeping this horrible secret from his parents. After graduating from high school, Lloyd secured a speaking part in a production of *The Count Of Monte Cristo* at a major Oakland playhouse called the Broadway Theater.

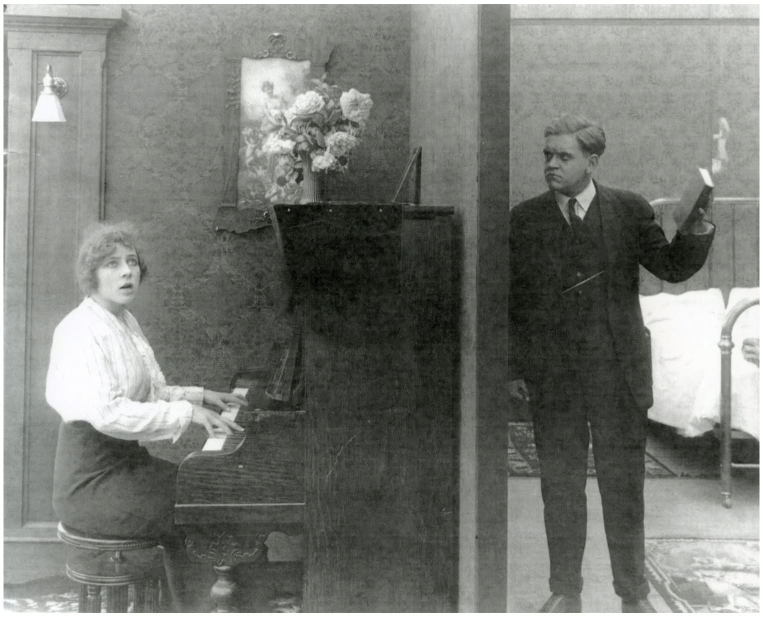
Hamilton then moved to San Francisco and joined Frank Butler's stock company at the Alcazar Theater, where he worked with and became lifelong friends with fellow apprentice thespians Edmund Lowe and Lloyd Bacon. Now facing parental disapproval, in 1910 Hamilton joined James K. Hackett's stock company and played theaters up and down the West Coast. Veteran actor Hackett was apparently the first one to notice Lloyd's flare for comedy, though Hamilton alternated in both dramatic and comic roles while in the company.

Hamilton tried to expand his comedic and musical talents by joining a musical comedy ensemble playing at the America Theater in 1911, and he soon joined a travelling comedy troupe called the Frank Cooley Show.

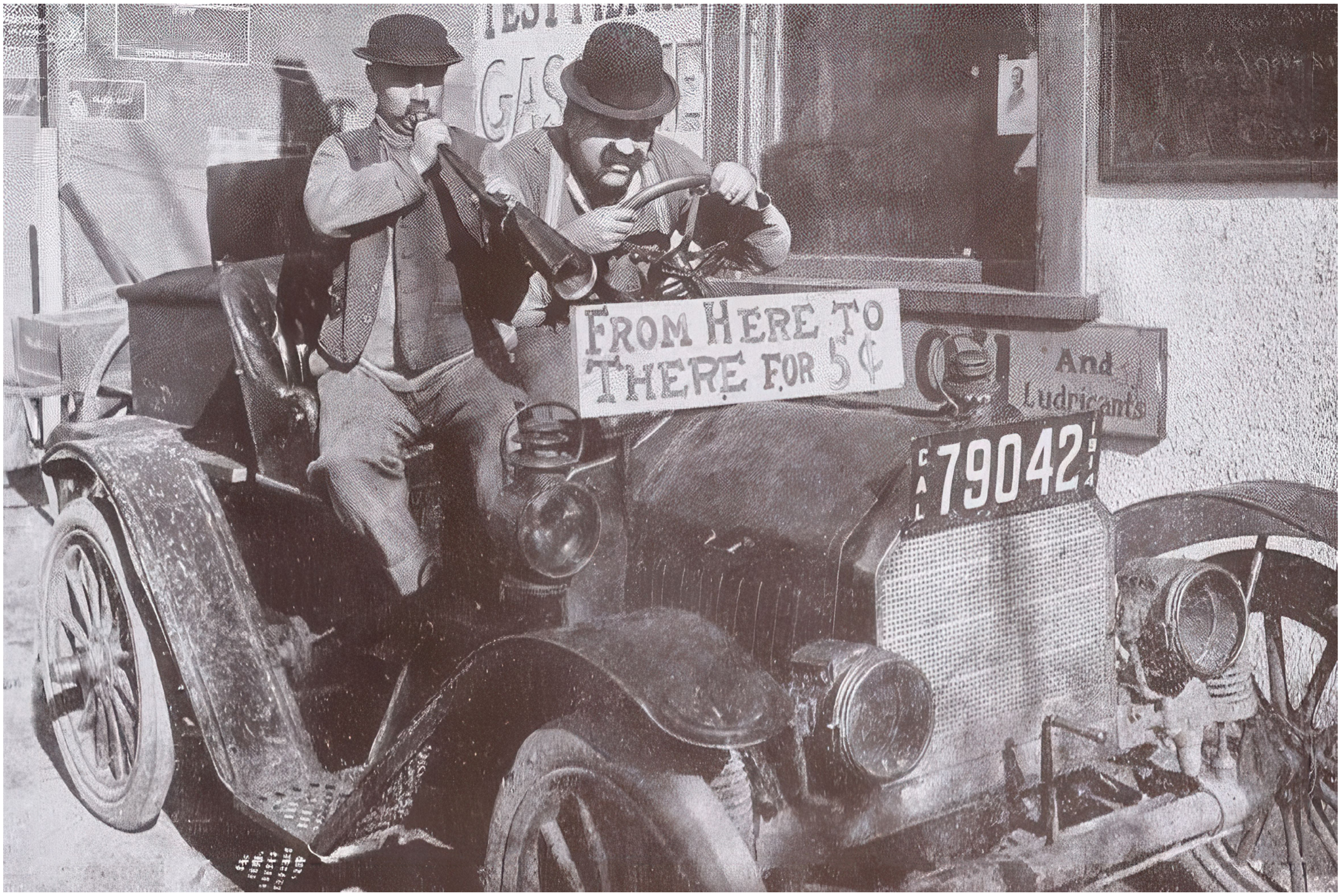
Sometime during this period, Lloyd Hamilton got his first taste of movie acting, playing an extra role on a horse during the shooting of a Lubin drama sometime around 1912. Lloyd was unimpressed with having to remain on a horse all day, and decided to remain in the theater instead. Hamilton also later related the experience in some press interviews as having suffered the indignity of a custard pie in the face during the shooting of a Lubin comedy, in any event, Hamilton returned to the stage.

However, a year later he was back in front of the camera again. The St. Louis Film Company, then producing the Frontier Brand westerns and comedies for Universal, had moved its production facilities to Albuquerque, New Mexico, tot he old Melies studios in Santa Paula, California, north of Los Angeles. Weary of touring, Hamilton signed on with them late in the summer of 1913 as a serious actor. Stills from his early Frontier films show the twenty-two year old Hamilton playing everything from old men to Mexican bandits. Within a few months, producer Gilbert P. Hamilton (no relation) promoted young Lloyd to featured, then leading roles.

One of two Hamilton Frontier films known to survive is *Pretzel Catches The Smugglers* (March 1914), which is also



Lloyd Hamilton also appeared in dramatic roles at Frontier like this unidentified one with May Cruze.



About to become an official team: Lloyd Hamilton and Bud Duncan in *Ham And The Jitney Bus* (1915)

the first Pretzel comedy Hamilton made for Frontier. Hamilton is dressed in stock, Dutch comic make-up, similar to Ford Sterling in appearance. In this fast-paced, very low budget comedy, Pretzel and his three "bonehead" customs officers chase smugglers across either side of the border, accidentally shooting the smuggler's mother in the fracas. In revenge, the smugglers tie the heroin to a cannon, and suspend Pretzel and his partner over a cliff, then setting fire to the rope.

The first Pretzel comedy received such a positive reaction with audiences that Hamilton was moved into Frontier's comedy program, producing eight more Pretzel comedies before changing to a country bumpkin character called "Hiram". It was also at this time that Lloyd met and fell in love with Ethel Floyd, an actress who worked in Frontier Films. They were married in early 1914.

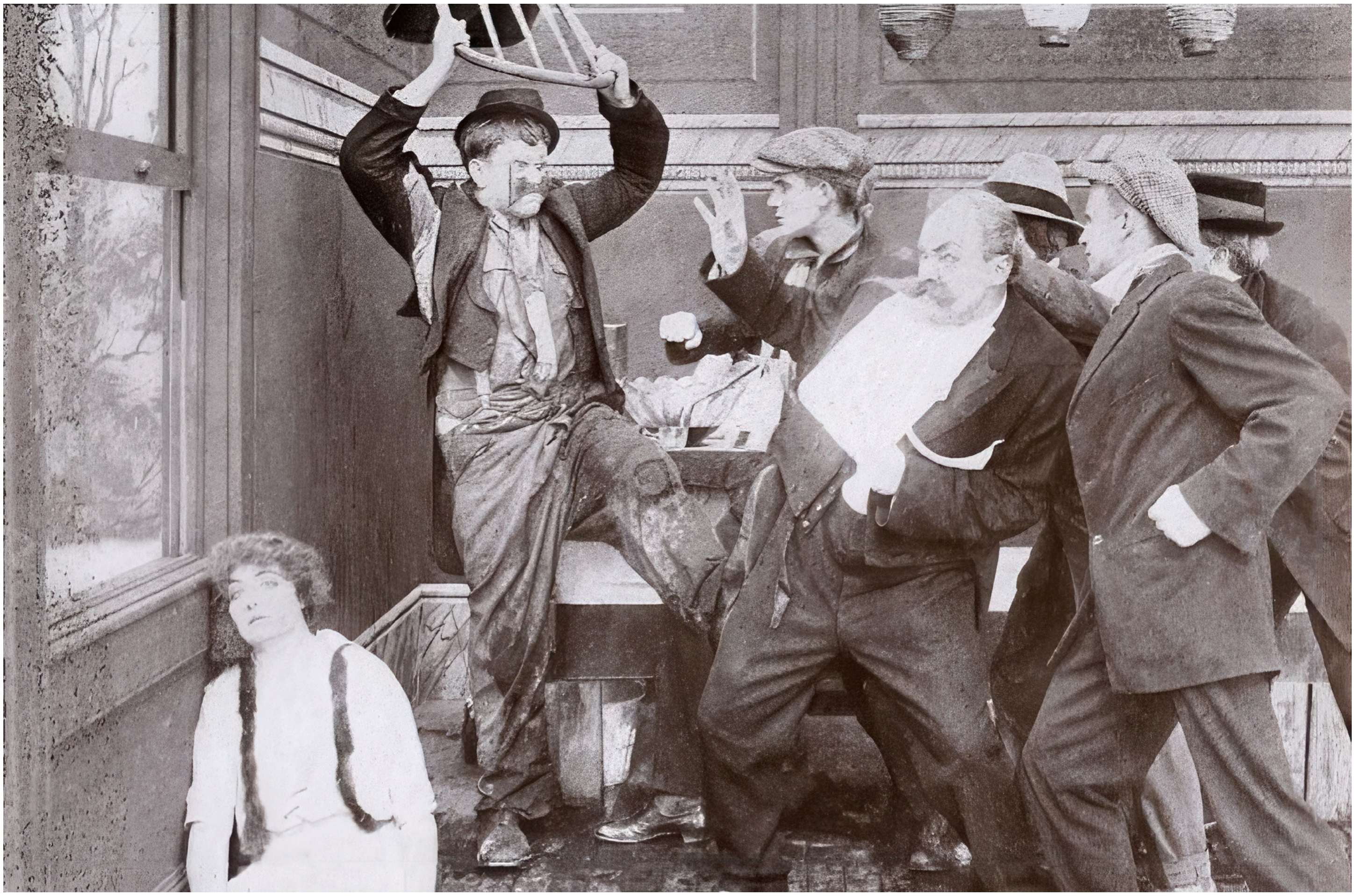
That Cuckooville Horserace (released April 16, 1914) also survives and continued the rivalry between Pretzel and Schnitzel that ends in a horse and buggy race. It is not as nearly as clever as *Pretzel Catches The Smugglers*, but is certainly a more elaborate short.

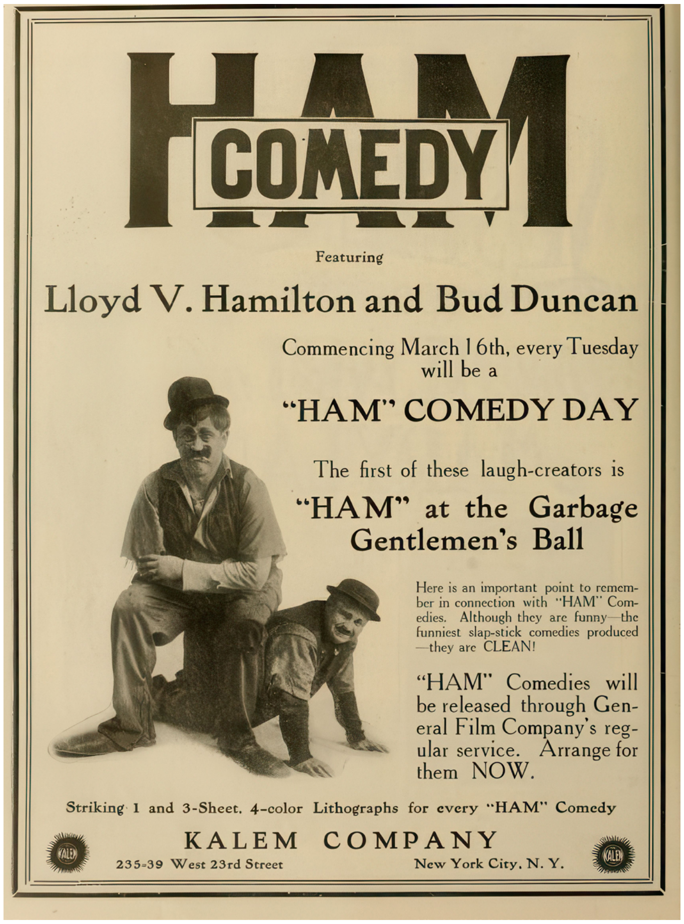
Unfortunately, Frontier was considered by Universal to be one of their lesser products, giving them little or no publicity. Hamilton realized that he had gone as far as he could with Frontier, and began to look for greener pastures. He signed to the Kalem Company in July, 1914, appearing first in *The Deadly Battle At Hicksville* (July 31st, 1914) and then regally appearing in support of Kalem's popular team of Ruth Roland and Marshal Neilan. Neilan also directed the films, and quickly became close friends with Hamilton. Neilan quickly appreciated Hamilton's comic potential and featured him prominently in the shorts, giving him more and more screen time to develop his talents.

Soon Hamilton was being featured to good advantage, playing Ruth Roland's father in *The Winning Whiskers* (December 22nd, 1914), a zany spoof on the penny dreadful melodramas. Resigned to being a comedian, Hamilton became quite useful to Kalem, both as actor and as gagman behind the camera.

In late 1914, Neilan began pairing the six foot Hamilton with pint sized player Bud Duncan. Born in Brooklyn on Halloween, 1886, Duncan had a long background in vaudeville before entering movies in 1912, playing "Jeff" in Al Christie's early live action version of "Mutt and Jeff" for Universal. Bud had also worked for Biograph and Apollo supporting Fred Mace before joining Kalem. Sensing success in this new contrasting couple, Neilan began giving "Ham and Bud" so much footage that they were virtually co-stars with Ruth Roland.

The camera spends as much





HAM COMEDY

Featuring

Lloyd V. Hamilton and Bud Duncan

Commencing March 16th, every Tuesday will be a

"HAM" COMEDY DAY

The first of these laugh-creators is

"HAM" at the Garbage Gentlemen's Ball

Here is an important point to remember in connection with "HAM" Comedies. Although they are funny—the funniest slap-stick comedies produced—they are CLEAN!

"HAM" Comedies will be released through General Film Company's regular service. Arrange for them NOW.

Striking 1 and 3-Sheet, 4-color Lithographs for every "HAM" Comedy

KALEM COMPANY

235-39 West 23rd Street New York City, N. Y.

ABOVE: Lloyd Hamilton takes on all comers (including Charles Inslee) and apparently has already taken on poor Marin Sais in *Ham At The Garbage Gentleman's Ball* (1915)

LEFT: Mark your calendars! March 16 is the official holiday: HAM DAY! Ad for the first official "Ham" comedy, *Ham At The Garbage Gentleman's Ball* (1915)

BELOW: Bud Duncan out-of-costume.

time on Ham and Bud's hijinks as garage mechanics in *Love, Oil And Grease* (December 29th, 1914) as it does the complicated exploits of Roland as a female car salesman. Whenever the plot gets too boring, we return to Hamilton and Duncan throwing bricks, shooting oil, or careening down the street in a runaway car, dragging Ham behind it.

The infamous *Ham And The Sausage Factory* (1914) with Charles Inslee and future sausages.

Roland and Hamilton's comedy styles clashed, and it became obvious that Kalem was wasting too many popular stars in the same film. In March, 1915, Ham and Bud were given their own series of weekly one-reelers. The new "Ham" comedies (Bud never made the cut in the brand name) began with *Ham At The Garbage Gentleman's Ball*, released on March 16, 1915 featuring Kalem leading lady Marin Sais holding her own with the already violent team brick for brick.

Kalem had been starring Hamilton and Duncan in shorts for several months, including the still-traumatic *Ham And The Sausage Factory* (released February 12, 1915). Essentially a reworking of an old Vaudeville standard, also made in an early Edison short *The Dog Factory* (1904), the Ham and Bud version has the Boys going to work for a Butcher who is having a problem with his meat supply, leaving Ham to send Bud out to the streets to round-up the local canine population for the grinder. Already Ham and Bud are veering towards a very cartoonish black humor, certainly compared to the rather dark natures of then current comic strips like Bud Fisher's "Mutt and Jeff" and George Herriman's "Krazy-Cat". Ham and Bud are obviously not going for cute and cuddly nor even likeability. Ham and Bud essentially become the Burke and Hare of Silent Comedy, the psychotic comedy team for the Twentieth Century. Showing neither love, caring, or even tolerance for each other, they are often tramps, scavengers, even murderers who will happily sell each other for medical experiments, or casually abuse total strangers with the same compunction as one might say, "How do you do."

What's not to love? This is why Ham and Bud are so wonderful, and a delight to run for a modern-day, politically-correct audience (this Author has seen whole groups of Ham and Bud audiences jaw-dropped like the first-night crowd in Mel Brooks' *The Producers* viewing "Springtime for Hitler"). One would think Ham and Bud would be the perfect rediscovery for a culture raised on the likes of *South Park* or *Beavis And Butthead* because really, H and B were the B and B of their generation.

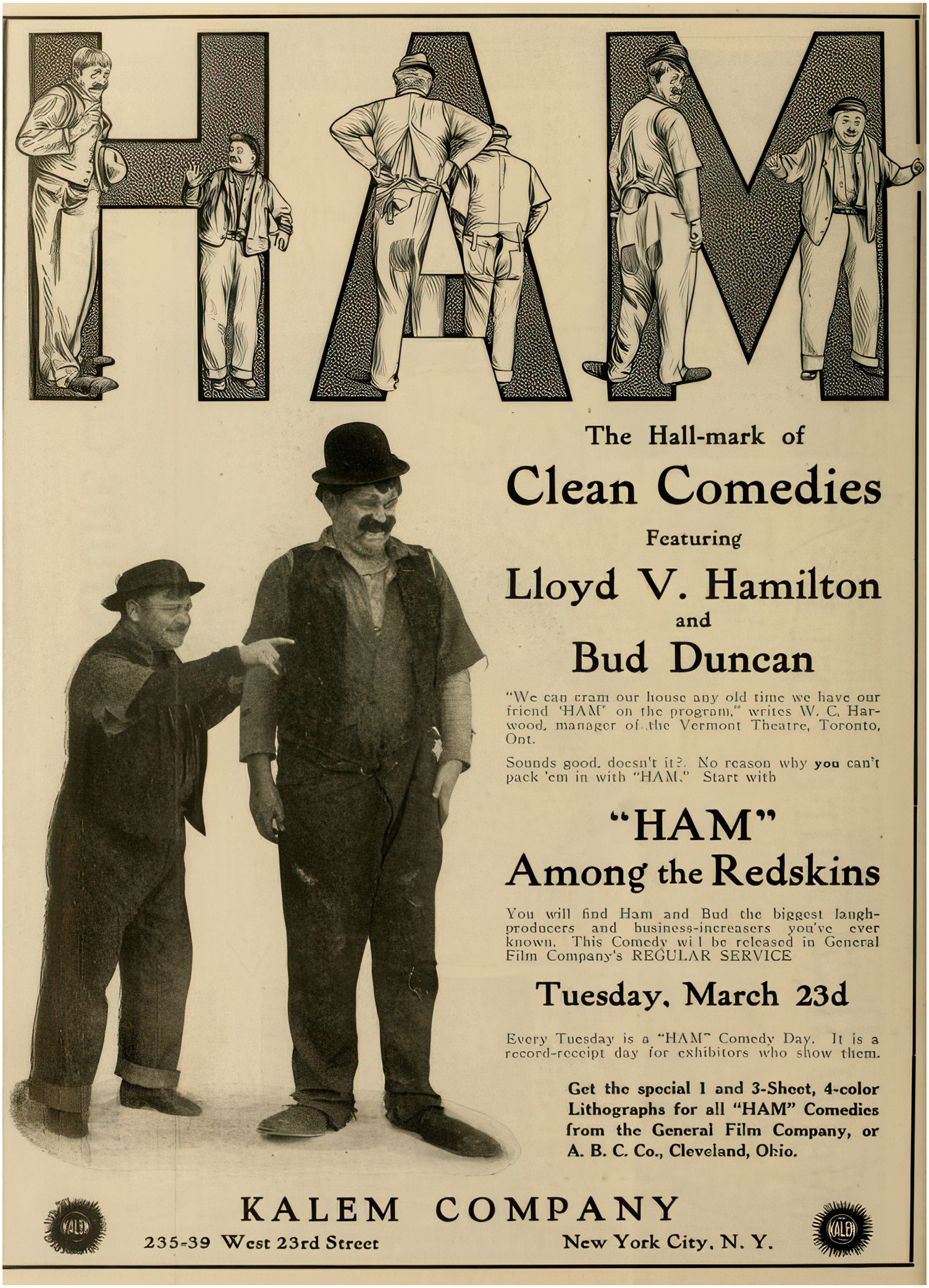
And it is exactly the effect Messr's Hamilton and Duncan were trying to achieve. Along with Mack Sennett's Keystone Comedies and others, many of the laughgetters of 1914 and 15 were actually retaliating against a period of enforced civility that had become the norm of the Motion Picture Industry since the late 1900's, when a definite push towards attracting a more middle-class and genteel audience became prominent. Once again, grotesquery was becoming the comic order of the day.

For a single reel, audiences could dethatch and vent their own frustrations through this delightfully crass couple of creeps, Ham and Bud usually got it back in spades by reel's end, and it was exactly that cartoony nature that made it all harmless.

Jaws continued dropping at a Slapsticon showing of *Ham Among The Redskins* (released March 23, 1915), as they become Indian fighters, which means Hamilton and Duncan took a crew into the Hollywood Hills, brought along several large clubs, and knock several Kalem extras dressed in beads and feathers into submission, aided once again by the game Marin Sais. What more comic set-up does one need? At one point, Ham says to Bud, "Go out and find us a small Indian to practice on," at which command

Looking for a small one they can practice on. *Ham Among The Redskins* (1915).

Beware
INDIANS on the
WAR PATH



HAM

The Hall-mark of

Clean Comedies

Featuring

Lloyd V. Hamilton

and

Bud Duncan

"We can cram our house any old time we have our friend 'HAM' on the program," writes W. C. Harwood, manager of the Vermont Theatre, Toronto, Ont.

Sounds good, doesn't it? No reason why **you** can't pack 'em in with "HAM." Start with

"HAM" Among the Redskins

You will find Ham and Bud the biggest laugh-producers and business-increasers you've ever known. This Comedy will be released in General Film Company's REGULAR SERVICE

Tuesday, March 23d

Every Tuesday is a "HAM" Comedy Day. It is a record-receipt day for exhibitors who show them.

Get the special 1 and 3-Sheet, 4-color Lithographs for all "HAM" Comedies from the General Film Company, or A. B. C. Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

KALEM COMPANY

235-39 West 23rd Street New York City, N. Y.

"Clean Comedies"? Had the Kalem publicity department even seen *Ham Among The Redskins* (1915)?

Bud goes off to bring in a child-brave in which they "practice on" with their various clubs in typical satirical sociopathy. Not to fear, the beaten kid will give as good as he gets, but the cruelty displayed is completely casual and comic because of the detachment.

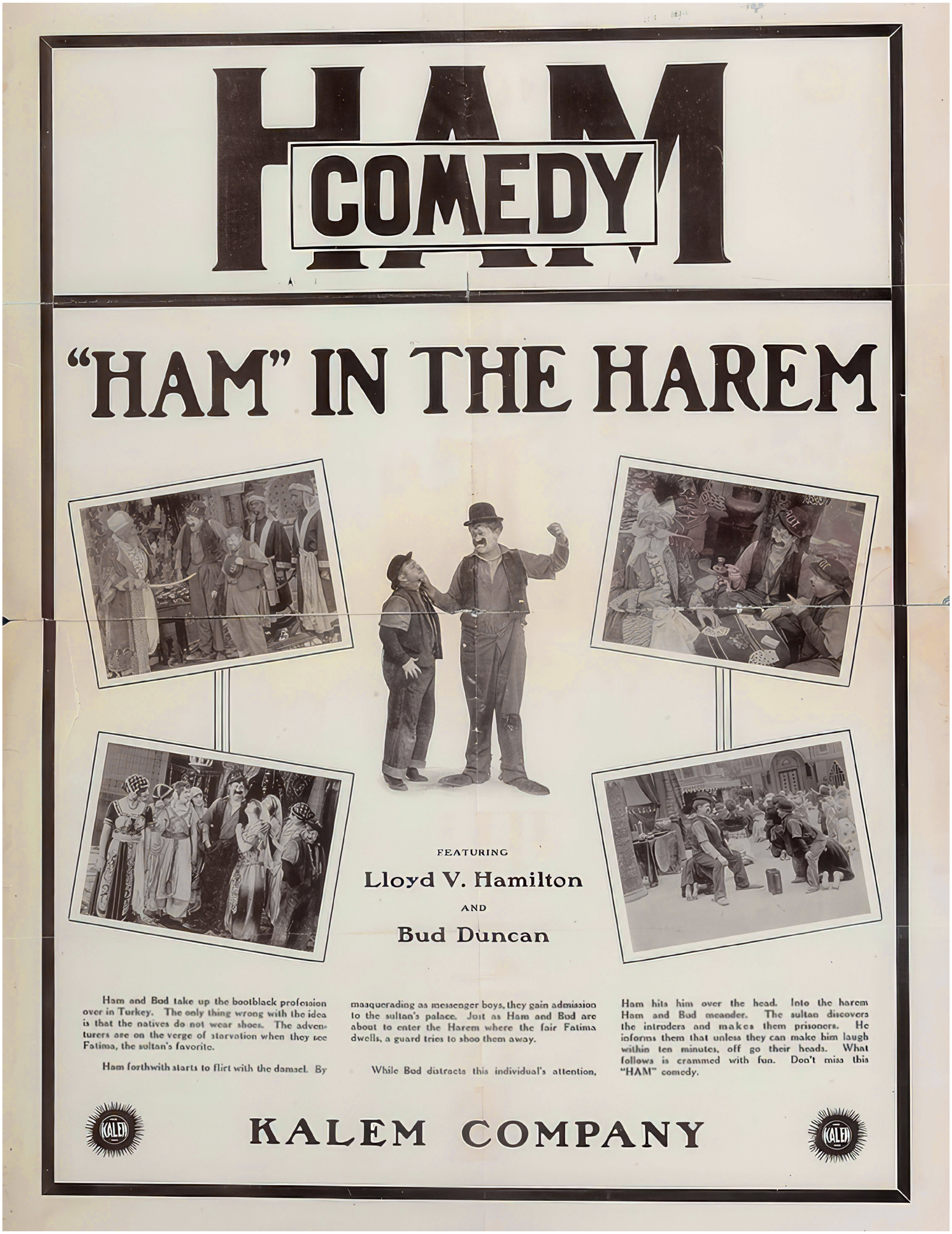
Whatever they were called, the comedies went over big with audiences, and Hamilton quickly became Kalem's top comedy star. For many years, few of these films were available for viewing, and those that did were dismissed by silent film enthusiasts (myself included) as "primitive". Yet very recently, several dozen of the over one hundred have reappeared, casting new light on a very curious comic mind at work. Hamilton quickly took charge of the series; writing, supervising, and even sometimes directing, and the comedies display the same penchant for bizarre gags and far out humor that permeate his later work.

In *The Star Boarders* (August 22nd, 1916), they devise a plan to raise some cash by gassing everyone in their boarding house into unconsciousness and stealing the furniture. When shooting bedbugs in bed with his pistol in *The Phoney Cannibal* (April 27th, 1915), Ham believes, mistakenly, that he has murdered his landlady. He then proceeds to strangle Bud, who has witnessed the crime, throwing the body out the fourth story window. Then, suddenly struck with remorse, Ham tries to commit suicide. Three attempted murders in less than five minutes must be some sort of record for a one-reel comedy. They are grave robbers in *Midnight At The Old Mill* (June 6th, 1916), and Bud is willing to send Ham to the evil doctor when no other bodies are available (you thought we were kidding about the medical experiments part).

Some of the comedies verge on the science fiction. In *The Love Magnet* (October 10th, 1916), Bud has purchased a magnet that attracts pretty girls. Ham accidentally steals one that attracts ugly girls and a chase ensues that is almost a prototype for Buster Keaton's *Seven Chances*. The boys finally escape the deluge of women by swimming out to sea with two mermaids that happen to pass by.

Though Marshall Neilan had helmed the earliest Ham and Bud adventures, a new Director, Chance E. Ward, took on the series once it officially became a series. Ward was in the chair until August, 1915, when Rube Miller, a former circus clown and Keystone comedian and gagman took the reins, though he would only stay a few months.

Ham In A Harem (1915) with Charles Inslee.



HAM COMEDY

"HAM" IN THE HAREM

FEATURING

Lloyd V. Hamilton

AND

Bud Duncan

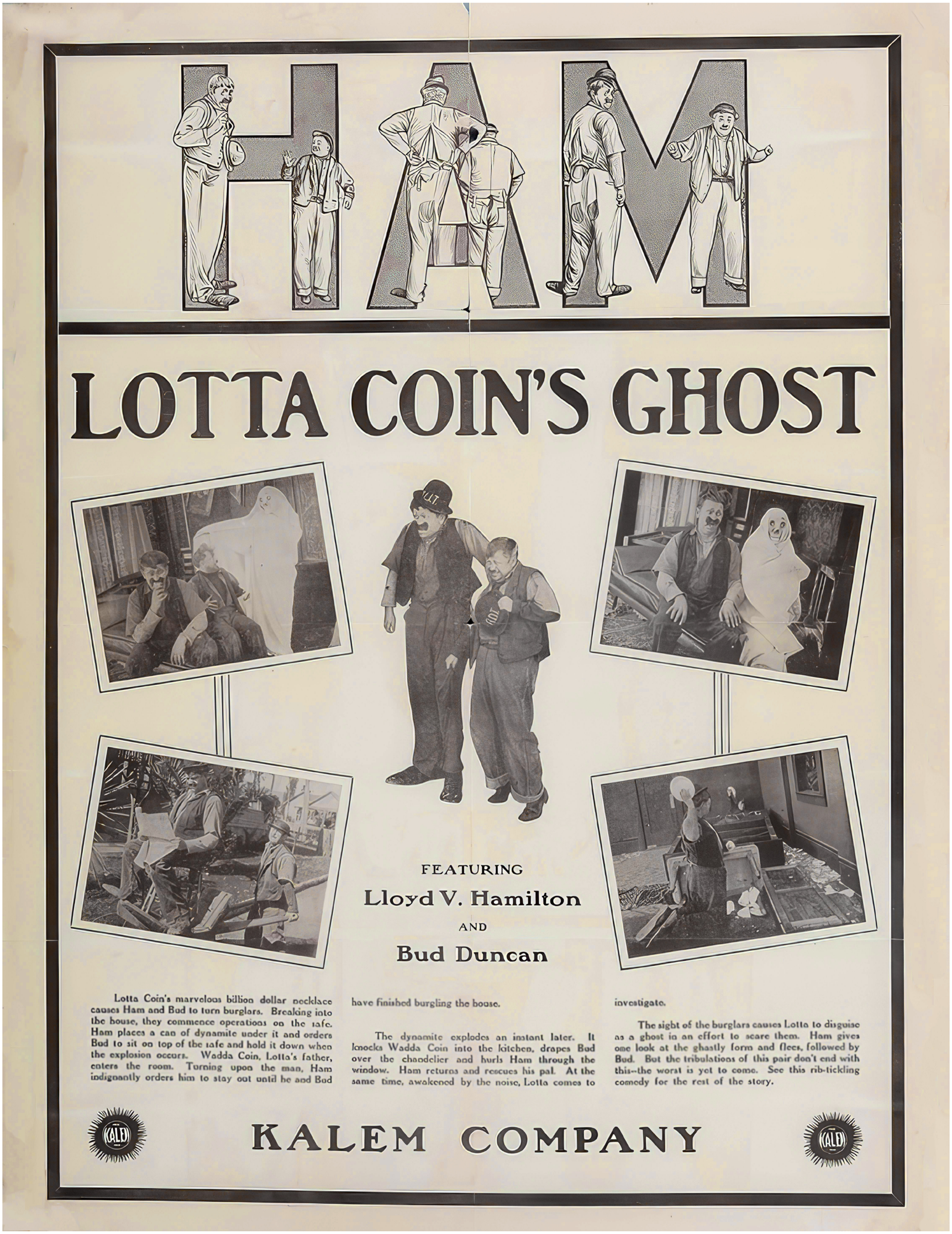
Ham and Bud take up the bootblack profession over in Turkey. The only thing wrong with the idea is that the natives do not wear shoes. The adventurers are on the verge of starvation when they see Fatima, the sultan's favorite.

Ham forthwith starts to flirt with the damsel. By masquerading as messenger boys, they gain admission to the sultan's palace. Just as Ham and Bud are about to enter the Harem where the fair Fatima dwells, a guard tries to shoo them away.

While Bud distracts this individual's attention, Ham hits him over the head. Into the harem Ham and Bud meander. The sultan discovers the intruders and makes them prisoners. He informs them that unless they can make him laugh within ten minutes, off go their heads. What follows is crammed with fun. Don't miss this "HAM" comedy.

KALEM COMPANY

Kalem ad for *Ham In A Harem* (1915).



HAM

LOTTA COIN'S GHOST

FEATURING

Lloyd V. Hamilton

AND

Bud Duncan

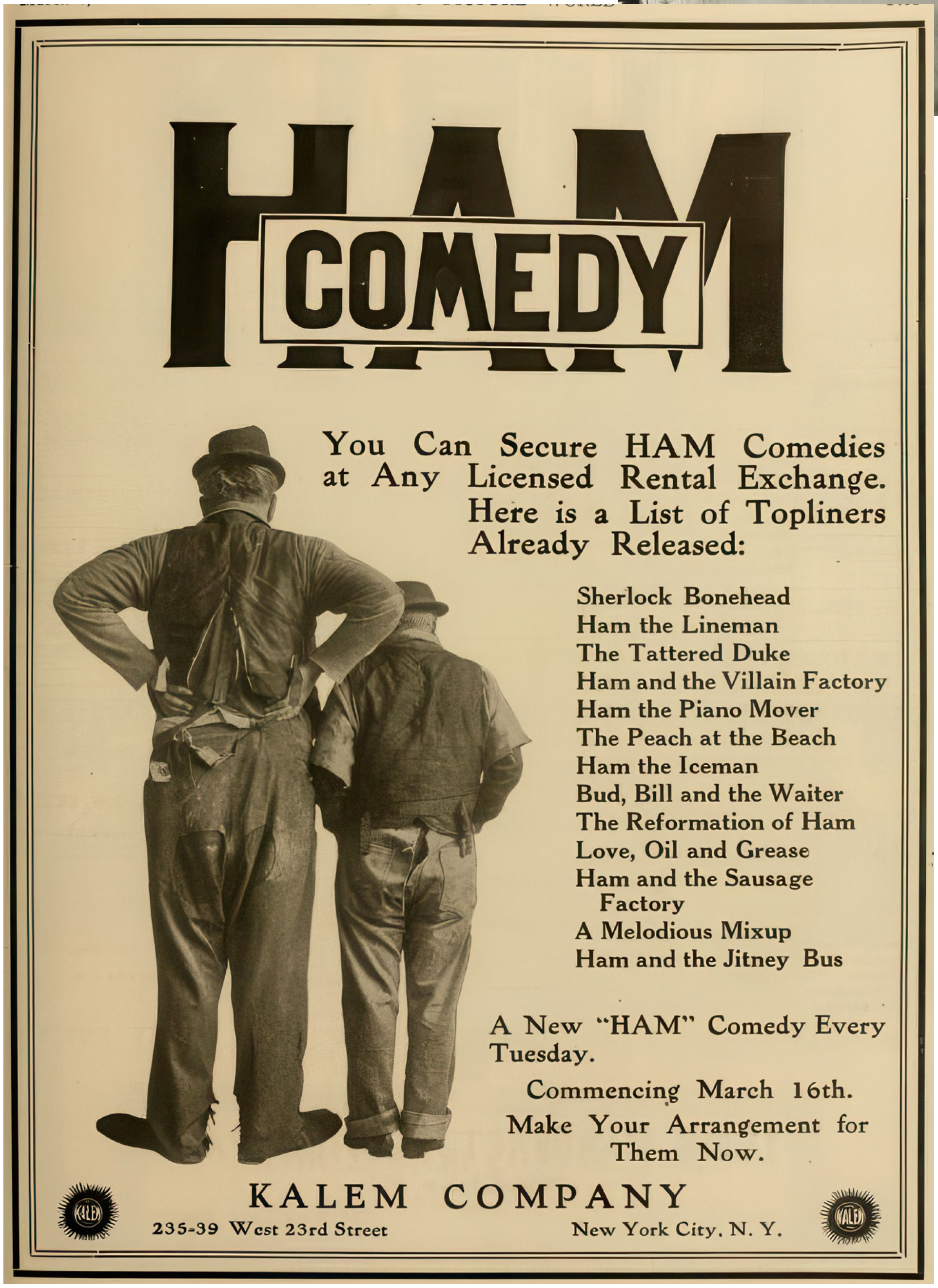
Lotta Coin's marvelous billion dollar necklace causes Ham and Bud to turn burglars. Breaking into the house, they commence operations on the safe. Ham places a can of dynamite under it and orders Bud to sit on top of the safe and hold it down when the explosion occurs. Wadda Coin, Lotta's father, enters the room. Turning upon the man, Ham indignantly orders him to stay out until he and Bud have finished burgling the house.

The dynamite explodes an instant later. It knocks Wadda Coin into the kitchen, drapes Bud over the chandelier and hurls Ham through the window. Ham returns and rescues his pal. At the same time, awakened by the noise, Lotta comes to investigate.

The sight of the burglars causes Lotta to disguise as a ghost in an effort to scare them. Ham gives one look at the ghastly form and flees, followed by Bud. But the tribulations of this pair don't end with this--the worst is yet to come. See this rib-tickling comedy for the rest of the story.

KALEM COMPANY

RIGHT: *Ham the Detective* (1915).



HAM COMEDY

You Can Secure HAM Comedies at Any Licensed Rental Exchange. Here is a List of Topliners Already Released:

Sherlock Bonehead
Ham the Lineman
The Tattered Duke
Ham and the Villain Factory
Ham the Piano Mover
The Peach at the Beach
Ham the Iceman
Bud, Bill and the Waiter
The Reformation of Ham
Love, Oil and Grease
Ham and the Sausage Factory
A Melodious Mixup
Ham and the Jitney Bus

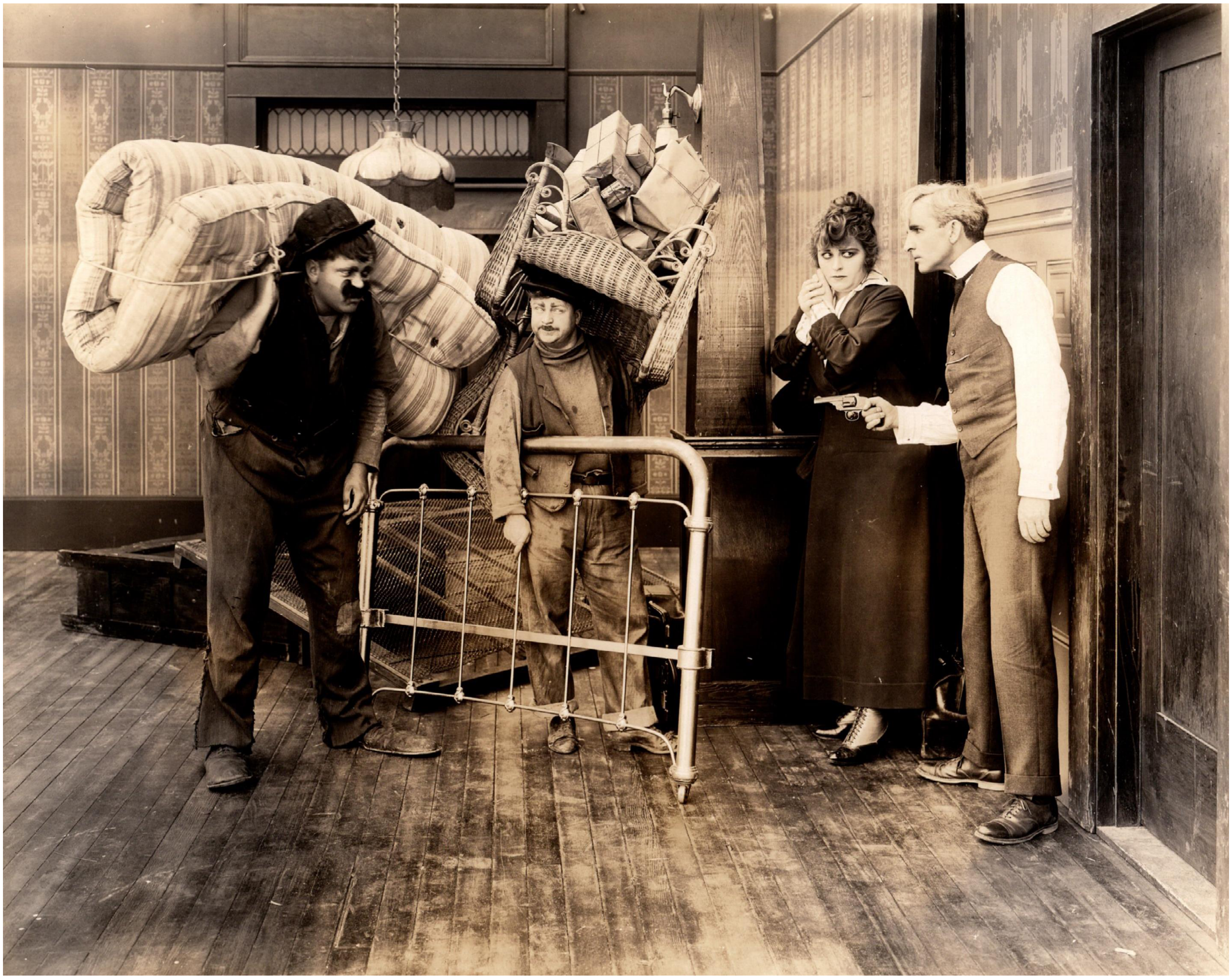
A New "HAM" Comedy Every Tuesday.

Commencing March 16th.

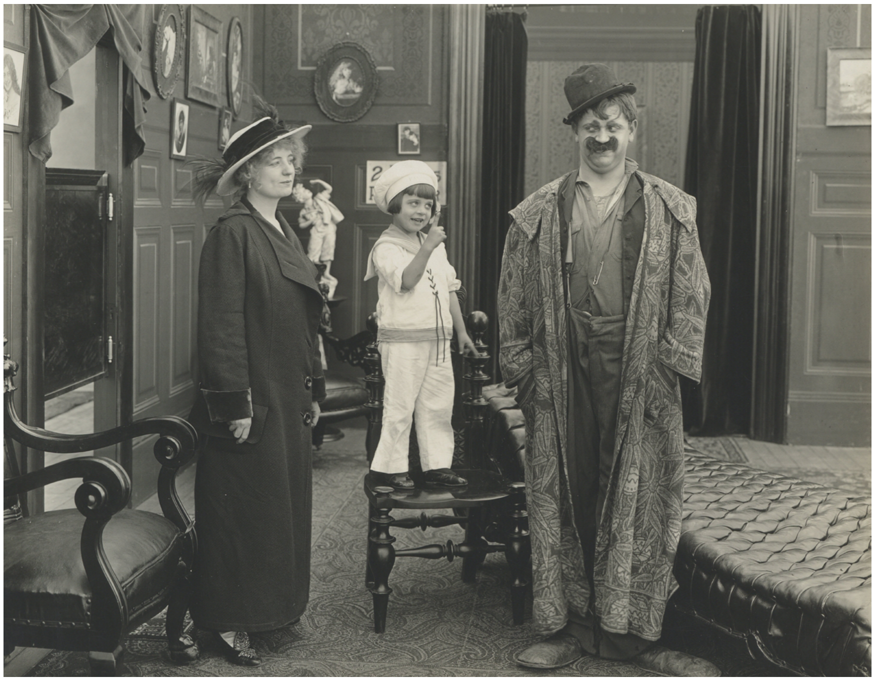
Make Your Arrangement for Them Now.

KALEM COMPANY
235-39 West 23rd Street
New York City, N. Y.

LEFT: Kalem trade ad for the first season of Ham Comedies.

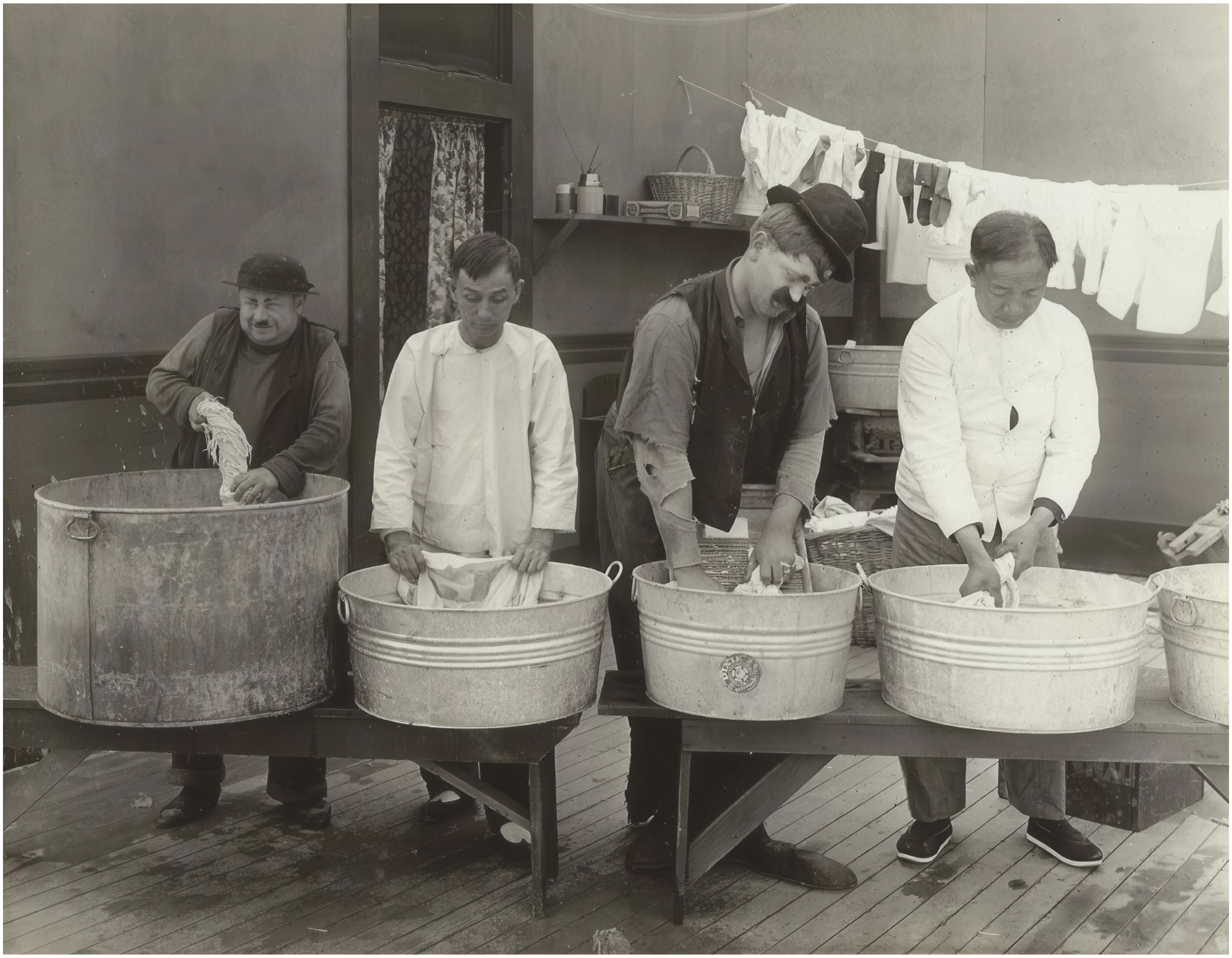


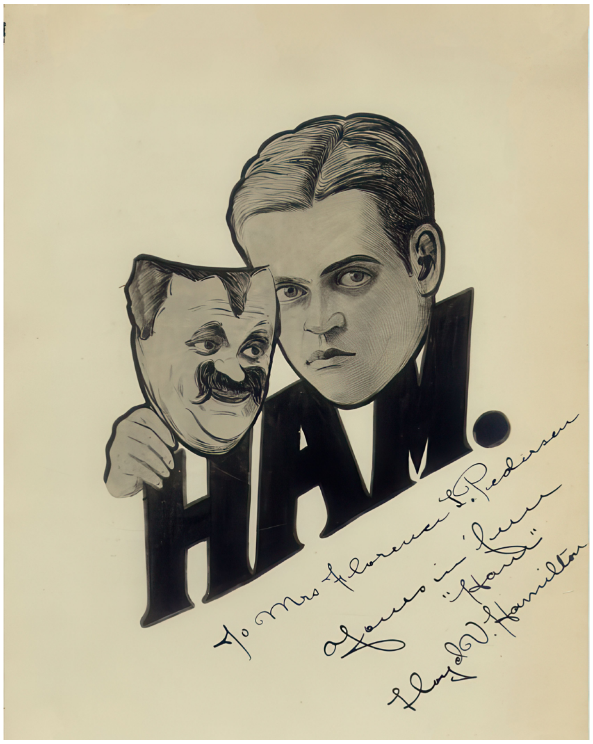
The Merry Moving Men (1915).



LEFT: *A Flashlight Flivver* (1915) L to R: Margaret Keyes, Billy Turnbill, Lloyd Hamilton.

OVERLEAF: *A Flashlight Flivver* (1915)




HAM.
To Mrs Florence L. Pedersen
Yours in love
"Ham"
Lloyd V. Hamilton

TOP: *The Winning Wash* (1915).

LEFT: An autographed card Lloyd Hamilton sent to fans during his Kalem days.

In September, 1915, Lloyd Hamilton suffered a severe injury to his left leg while executing a stunt fall down a hill for one of the comedies. The leg fractured in several places, keeping him off the screen until February, 1916. It would never heal properly, even after several operations, and would plague Hamilton for the rest of his life. Bud Duncan continued to star solo in the one-reelers, sometimes co-starring with one of their current directors, William Beaudine, then just beginning his long career, until Hamilton recuperated.

ABOVE, August 1915: Lloyd Hamilton breaks his left leg in several places, keeping him offscreen for the rest of the year, but Kalem made much publicity of Ham's injury and recuperation.

TOP: Even making Lloyd Hamilton make up as "Ham" in the hospital as Ethel Teare, William Beaudine and Bud Duncan visit him.

LEFT: Released from the hospital, Lloyd Hamilton is still recuperating at home trying to feed his pig with little peace from Bud Duncan.

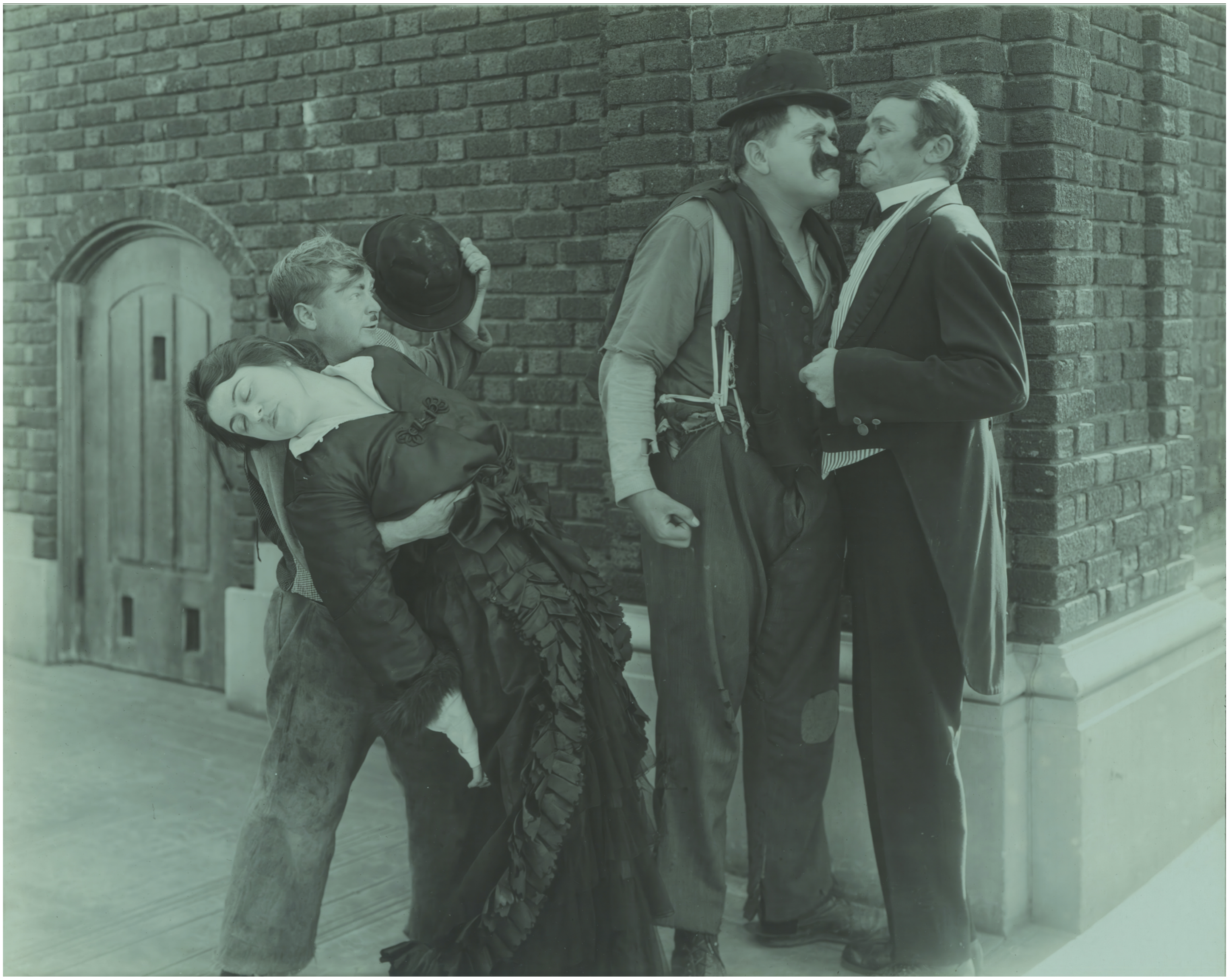
Scene from "Ham Takes a Chance" (Kalem).

TOP: Lloyd Hamilton and Bud Duncan hard at work creating gags and deep sentimental plotlines for their next Ham and Bud comedy.

ABOVE: Ethel Teare's enchanting smile welcomes Lloyd Hamilton back to work in his first Ham and Bud comedy since his leg injury, *Ham Takes A Chance* (1916).

By 1916, Ham and Bud were one of Kalem's top attractions. The comedies became more elaborate, with direction shared by Hamilton, William Beaudine, Harry Edwards, and later, Al Santell. More money was being spent, and the technical quality of the shorts continued to improve. The highlight of *A Whirlwind Of Whiskers* (August 24th, 1917) is a complicated chase with a policeman (played by soon to be western star Jack Hoxie) that utilizes rather sophisticated moving camera work and crane shots.

By 1917, Kalem was ailing financially, and apparently there were personal disputes between Hamilton and Duncan. In late August, the series came to an end. In the last released Ham and Bud comedy *Bathtub Bandits* (August 24th, 1917), they literally go out with a bang, being blown to smithereens by a cannonball, leaving only their empty boots behind.



ABOVE: *Winning The Widow* (1916), L to R: Bud Duncan, Adoni Fovieri, Lloyd Hamilton, Gus Leonard.

BELOW LEFT: *For Sweet Charity* (1916)

BELOW RIGHT: Undoubtedly another Ham scam afoot.........

The incredible warmth and personal likeability of Ham and Bud just oozes through their work as well as the apparent love they had for each other offscreen.

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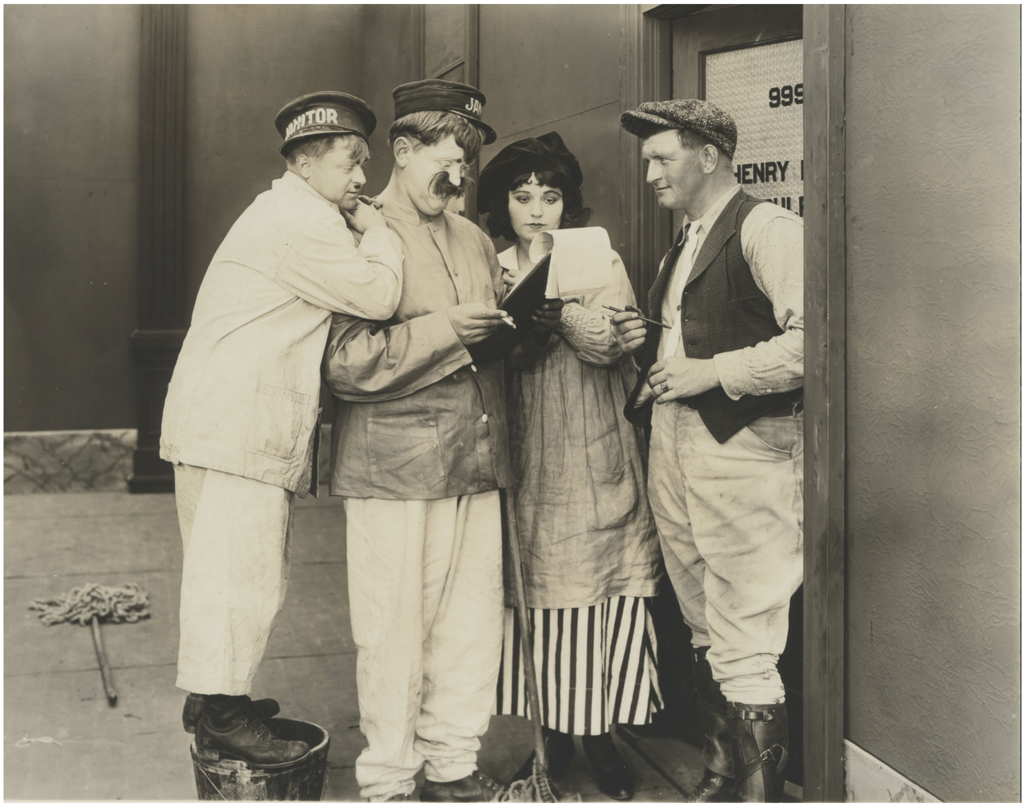
BEDDING SALE
3RD FLOOR
As Advertised
12½¢ yd.
BEACON SHOES

The New Salesman (1916), L to R: Lloyd Hamilton, Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdock.

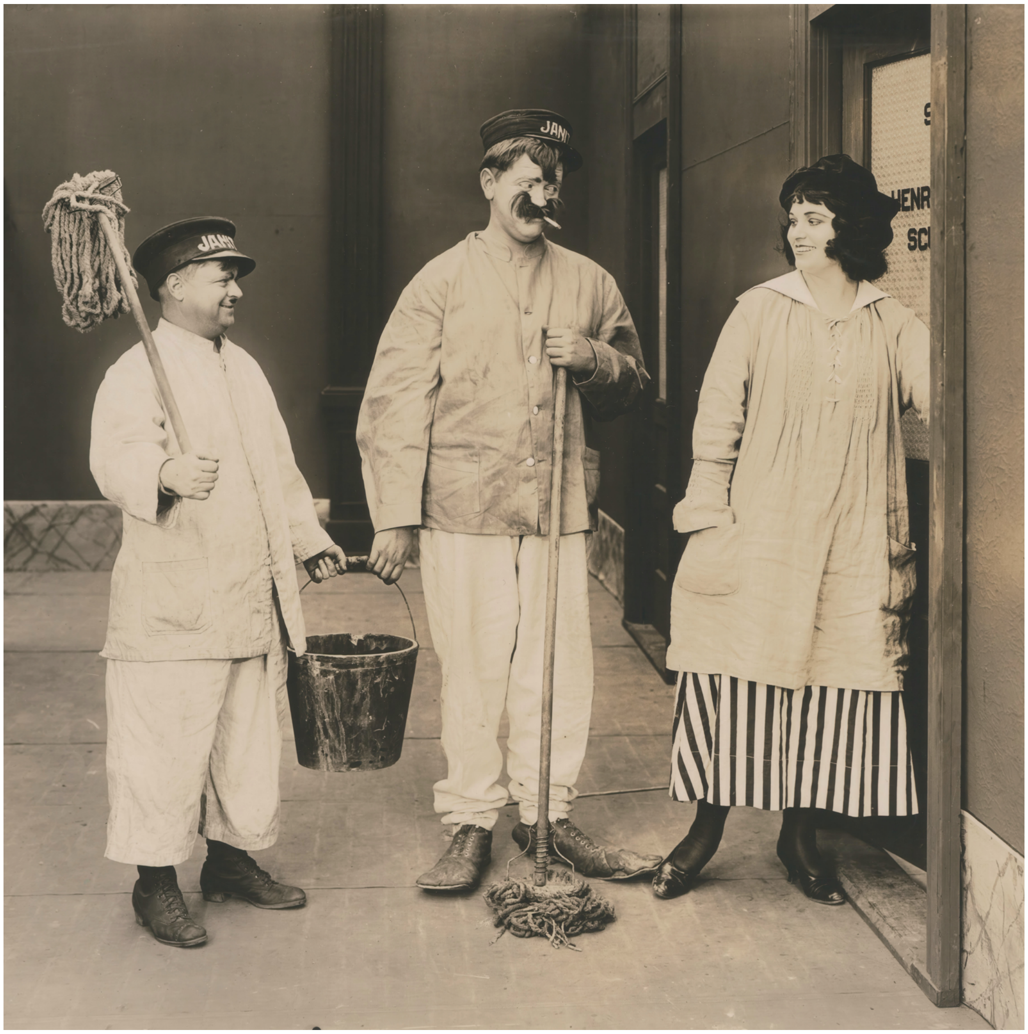
BAGGAGE MAN

The Baggage Smashers (1916)

The Heart Menders (1916)


JANITOR
JAN
999
HENRY

Director Lloyd Hamilton examines the script (script?) for *The Model Janitor* (1917) as Bud Duncan and Ethel Teare look over his shoulder.


JAN
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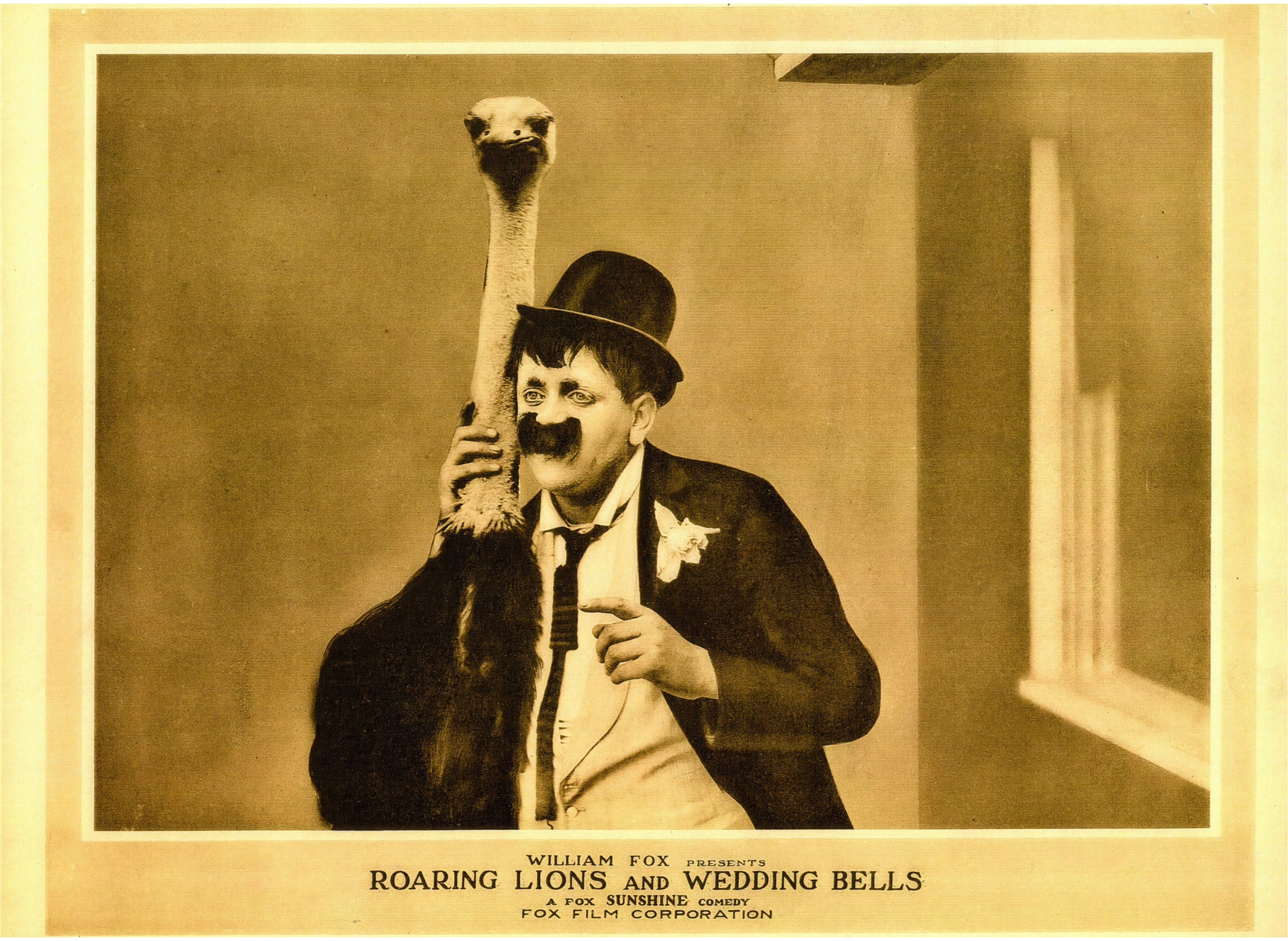
And now the scene as shot:
The Model Janitor (1917)



No Bud, new studio, not much different otherwise: Lloyd Hamilton in his first Fox Sunshine comedy (1917).

After leaving Kalem, Hamilton decided he would go it alone. He was looking for a new comedy style, something more refined than the slapstick of the Ham and Bud comedies. After a few months of fielding offers, he signed on in late 1917 with producer/director Henry Lehrman's new Sunshine comedy unit at Fox, defiantly a step up in the career ladder. Lehrman was a colorful, if not always fondly remembered, character, nicknamed "Pathé" by those he worked for, and "Suicide" by those he worked with.

Lehrman had got his start at Biograph in 1910, claiming to be a French film director fresh off the boat. He became a reasonably skilled comedy director, moving to Keystone and directing Chaplin's first four pictures. He then fought with Chaplin and Sennett, and left with Ford Sterling to form Sterling Comedies for Universal. He then fought with Sterling, and formed L-KO (Lehrman Knock-Out), also for Universal release. Two years later, he fought with Carl Laemele, and had left for Fox. Lehrman was notorious for his ego, cheapness, and lack of safety precautions in the execution of stuntwork, hence the "Suicide" moniker. But in the teens his comedies made money, giving Mack Sennett the only serious competition he had, and Lehrman became a crucial part of Lloyd Hamilton's career.

The Fox Sunshines have to be the Holy Grail of silent comedy. Very few exist, and even fewer are accessible, yet their titles, casts, and contemporary reviews make them sound irresistible. Lehrman managed to raid most of the comedy studios and came up with quite an impressive stock company: Ford Sterling, Hank Mann, Mae Busch, Paddy McGuire, Billie Ritchie, Heinie Conklin, Monty Banks, Chester Conklin, Billy Franey, Ethel Teare, and of course, Lloyd Hamilton.

They were high budgeted two-reelers, with major studio distribution, well promoted, and immensely popular.

Hamilton starred in the very first Sunshine Comedy, *Roaring Lions And Wedding Bells* (November 11th, 1917), still retaining the "Ham" moustache most likely for audience recognition. The film was directed by Jack White, who was not even twenty years old at the time and already a budding comedy director. It was White, along with Lehrman and fellow comedy director Charles Parrott who would be pivotal in helping Hamilton create and develop the character that would bring him the greatest fame, though that would be a gradual process. Parrott would later find fame in front of the camera as Charley Chase, and was also a lifelong friend and admirer of Hamilton, later naming him a direct influence on his own fussy comedy character.

Lloyd Hamilton and the Sunshine Comedy Crew (including Henry Lehrman, far right) shooting an early Sunshine Comedy.

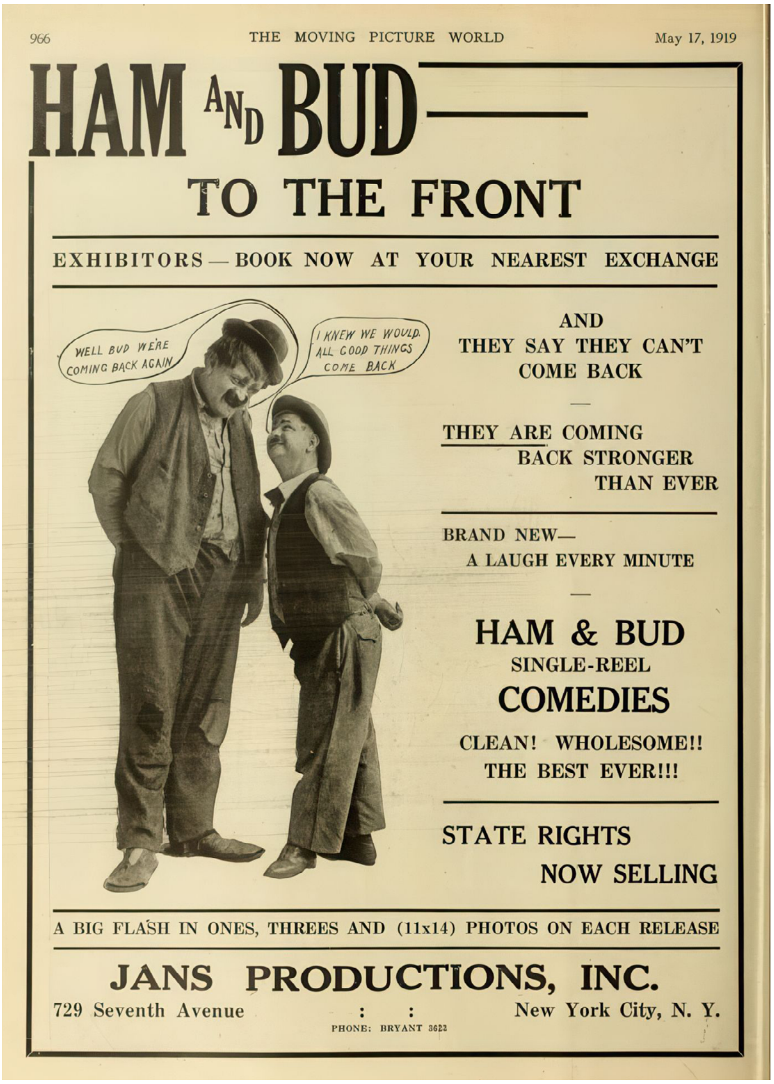
A Tight Squeeze (1918) Four Sunshine comedies in and now Lloyd Hamilton is beginning to change, reunited with Ethel Teare.

At first glance, the wild slapstick of Sunshines seems to bear little difference from that of Kalem's, except that it might be even more violent. *Hungry Lions In A Hospital* (released February 3, 1918) is a mad couple of reels indeed. Still dressed as "Ham", Lloyd is nominally the star of the film, but is really one comic among many including Charles "Heinie" Conklin, Jimmie Adams and Charles Dorety who are literally risking their lives as the film delivers on it's title in much the same manner as the recent *Snakes On A Plane* did. Ethel and Gene, the Lehrman Lions, are basically let loose on the hospital sets and the fun is watching the unarmed comedians do their best to try to stay out of their way.

A Tight Squeeze (July 28th, 1918) does exist, and is little more than a series of slapstick gags with barnyard animals and country humor. Finally free of the facial hair, Hamilton plays an innocent farm boy, and we begin to see, in embryo, traces of what was to be. Audiences must have been stunned at the change, unable to believe that Ham, the gruff, overbearing bully and this strange, new creature were one and the same.

Mongrels (1918): L to R: Charles Dorety, Lloyd Hamilton, Gertrude Selby.

Hamilton's work in the Sunshine Comedies was spotty, over the next year and a half Lloyd would only play the nominal lead in eight of these shorts, though as all comics under Henry Lehrman's employ, he may have played smaller, unbilled parts in a number of other Sunshines. He appears playing a train porter in blackface for all of thirty seconds in the extant *Roaring Lions On The Midnight Express* (released September 22, 1918). The low survival rate of the Sunshines also makes it truly difficult to trace Hamilton's metamorphosis into his Poor Soul persona, but by the time he starred in his last known Sunshine, *His Musical Sneeze* (released February 23, 1919) the change was definitely on its way.


WELL BUD WE'RE COMING BACK AGAIN
I KNEW WE WOULD. ALL GOOD THINGS COME BACK

966 THE MOVING PICTURE WORLD May 17, 1919

HAM AND BUD—

TO THE FRONT

EXHIBITORS—BOOK NOW AT YOUR NEAREST EXCHANGE

AND
THEY SAY THEY CAN'T
COME BACK

THEY ARE COMING
BACK STRONGER
THAN EVER

BRAND NEW—
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HAM & BUD
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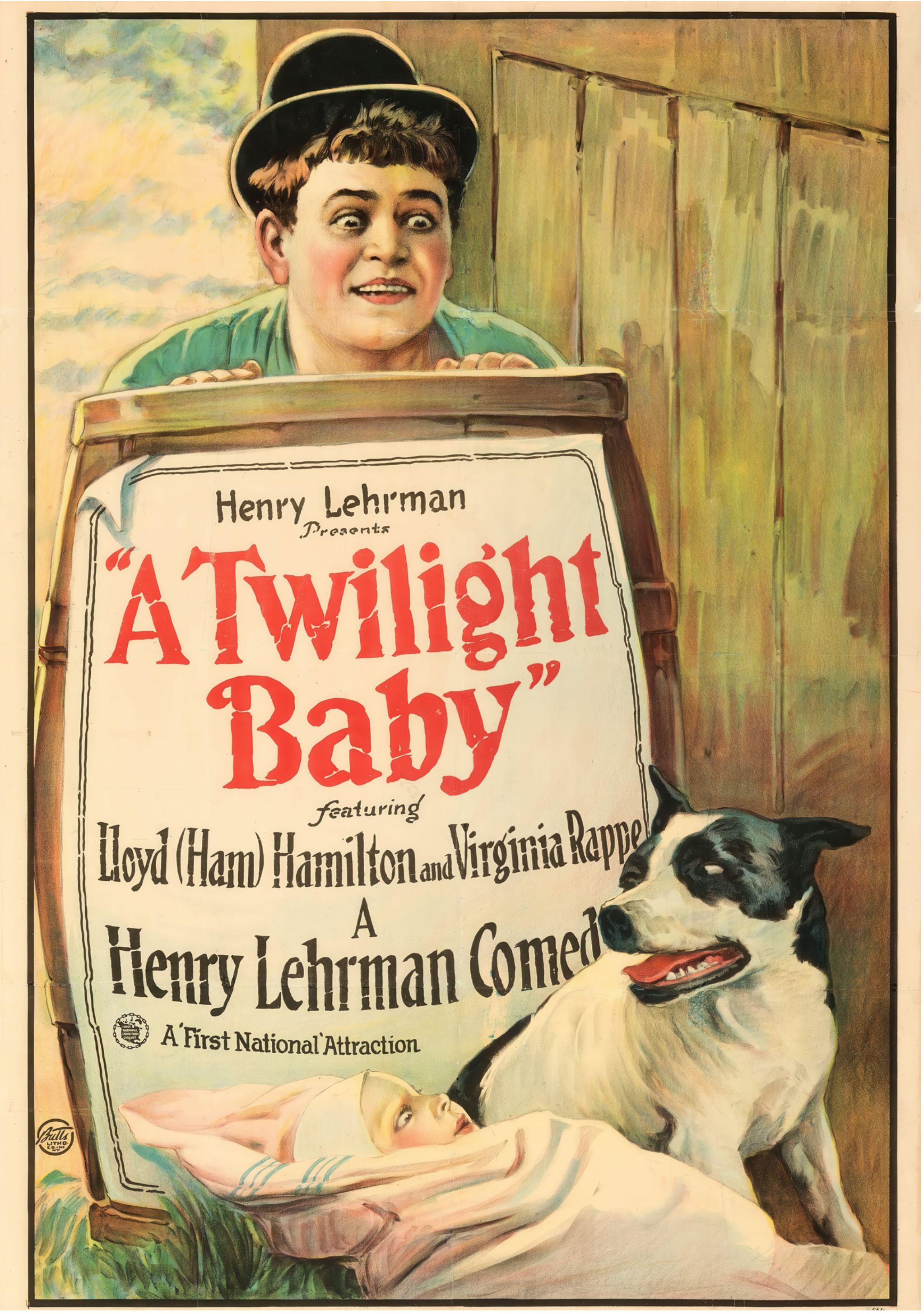
729 Seventh Avenue : : New York City, N. Y.
PHONE: BRYANT 3622

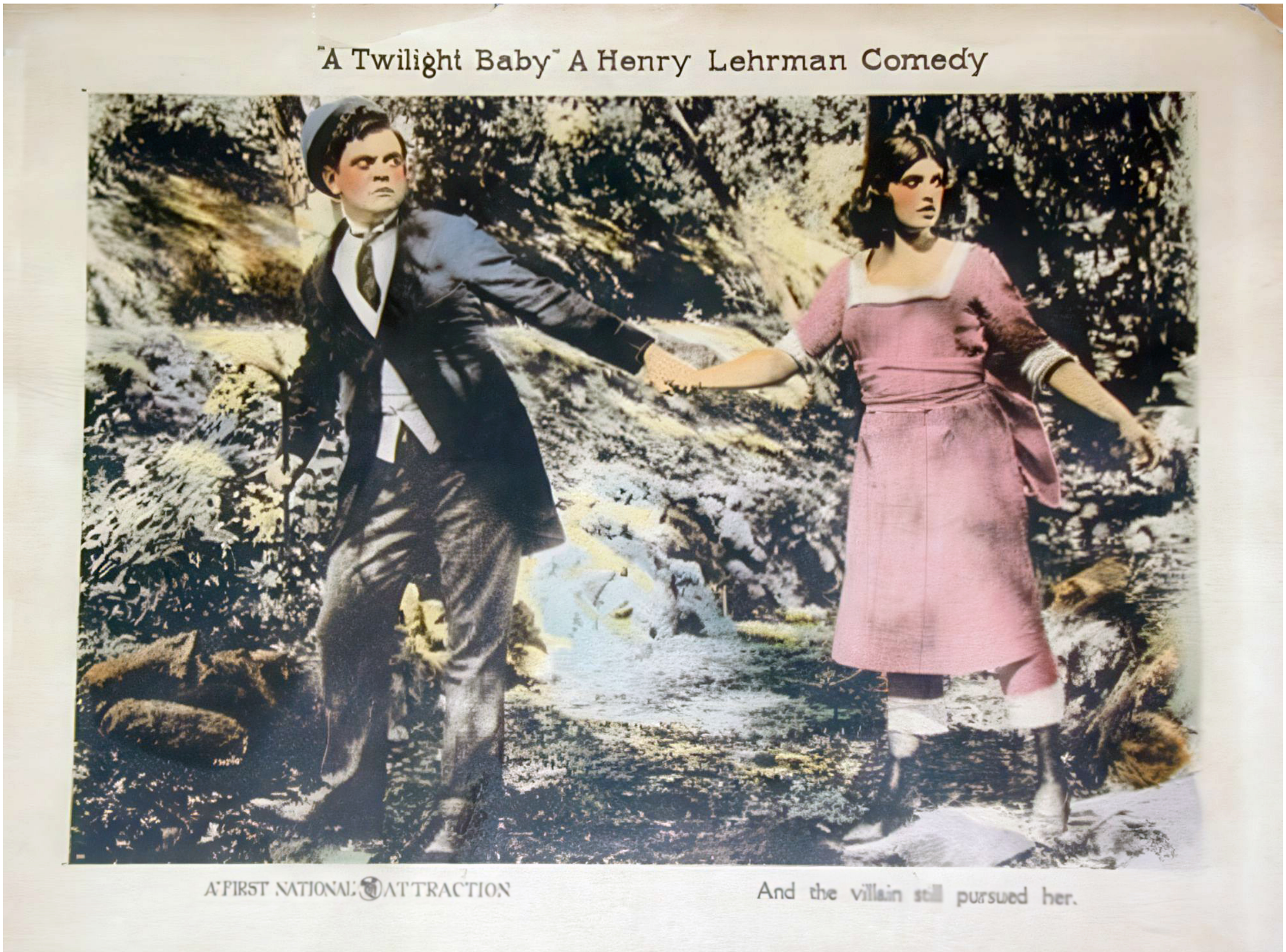
Just as Lloyd Hamilton was trying to distance himself from Ham and Bud, Jans Productions reissued the bulk of them in 1919. This is basically why they survive today, when the Jans negatives were deposited at the Museum of Modern Art, Iris Barry had them tossed in the garbage. Milton Menell retrieved them, preserved them, and released them to television in the 1950's through his Mar-Lu Telefilms. You can't destroy great art.


Henry Lehrman
Presents
"A Twilight Baby"
featuring
Lloyd (Ham) Hamilton and Virginia Rappe
A
Henry Lehrman Comed
A 'First National' Attraction

His Musical Sneeze has managed to turn up in a decomposing print missing some footage, but within it we see Hamilton playing a childlike spoiled rich kid who is mad for hunting. On the way to the hunt at his fiancé's father's estate, Hamilton goes mad to bag a mad bunny running (or in the reality of Lehrman's use of actual animals in his films, being dragged) in front of his car.

Even though the traces of Lloyd Hamilton's future character may be evident here, this is a Sunshine Comedy after all, so any traces of subtlety must be gleaned among some wild and crazy gags, but at least they are wonderful mechanical gags. Ham's bunny-hunt erupts into a free-for-all blast-fest as a group of Monty Pythonesquely-incompetent hunters join in, blazing their generally-aimed shotguns at the desperate hare. Yet this rabbit may be Bugs Bunny's grandfather as it burrows underground trails with the same speed as the Warner Bros animated character, with Hamilton burrowing a larger one beside it. Finally, Ham and the Hare pop up topside in separate holes, and Hamilton performs some fine comic byplay with a clever handpuppet version of the rabbit.

Hamilton continued to build his popularity in that year and a half with Sunshine Comedies, but the Sunshines were essentially ensemble affairs, and Lehrman was loath to give publicity to others than himself. True to his nature, Lehrman finally argued with Fox and left in early 1919, taking Hamilton and Jack White with him. Looking for a new distributor and money to produce short comedies took some time for Lehrman to arrange, which had the general effect of keeping Lloyd Hamilton off the screen for much of 1919. Loyal as Lloyd was to Lehrman, there is evidence

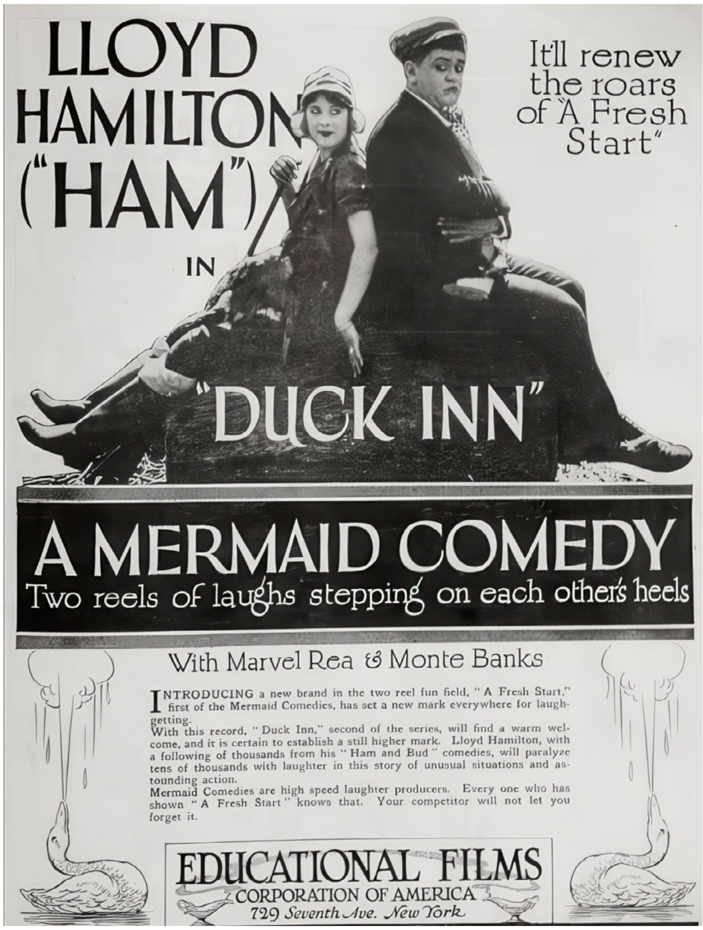

"A Twilight Baby" A Henry Lehrman Comedy
A FIRST NATIONAL ATTRACTION
And the villain still pursued her.

that he looked elsewhere for work in this period. Mack Sennett's publicity trumpeted that the producer was negotiating with Hamilton to star in the Sennett-Paramount comedies, and there is a scenario in the Sennett files for the film that became *No Mother To Guide Him*, mentioning Hamilton in the lead part that ended up being essayed by Ben Turpin. In the end, Hamilton and Sennett could not come to terms and it would be another decade and more before they briefly worked together.

Finally, in late 1919, Lehrman cut a new release deal with the fledgling First National Company, and found the funding to build a new studio in Culver City near the area where Hal Roach would build his own comic empire. Lehrman's premiere First National release would be a three-reel special starring Lloyd Hamilton titled *A Twilight Baby* (January 24th, 1920), directed by White and co-starring Lehrman's fiancée Virginia Rappe: who's tragic death at a San Francisco party a year and a half later would ruin the career of comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle.

A Twilight Baby is the first film in which Lloyd Hamilton begins to bring some depth to his characterization. Once again, he is a country bumpkin, but this time a cowardly one, trying to woo his childhood sweetheart back after being jailed for moonshining. Hamilton successfully manages pathos in the scene where his rival shoots his dogs, and he realizes the need for courage.

Despite the success, both critically and financially, of *A Twilight Baby*, both Hamilton and Jack White were tired of dealing with Henry Lehrman, and they were ready to escape from under Mr. Suicide's wing. Hamilton would only make one more short for Lehrman, *A Game Lady,* which wouldn't be released until the following Summer of 1921. While Jack White went off in search of financing for his own comedy company, Hamilton appeared in support of Lew Cody in the independently-released feature *Occasionally Yours,* which didn't hit theaters until September of 1920, and by that time, Hamilton and White were in business for themselves. They struck their deal with E. W. Hammons emerging Educational Pictures, who had entered the field of releasing short comedy product in 1919. With Hammons money they christened their new company Mermaid Comedies, and these shorts finally gave both Jack White and Lloyd Hamilton their first real opportunity to make comedies the way they wanted to and certainly allowed Hamilton the chance to break-


LLOYD HAMILTON ("HAM") IN
It'll renew the roars of "A Fresh Start"
"DUCK INN"
A MERMAID COMEDY
Two reels of laughs stepping on each other's heels
With Marvel Rea & Monte Banks

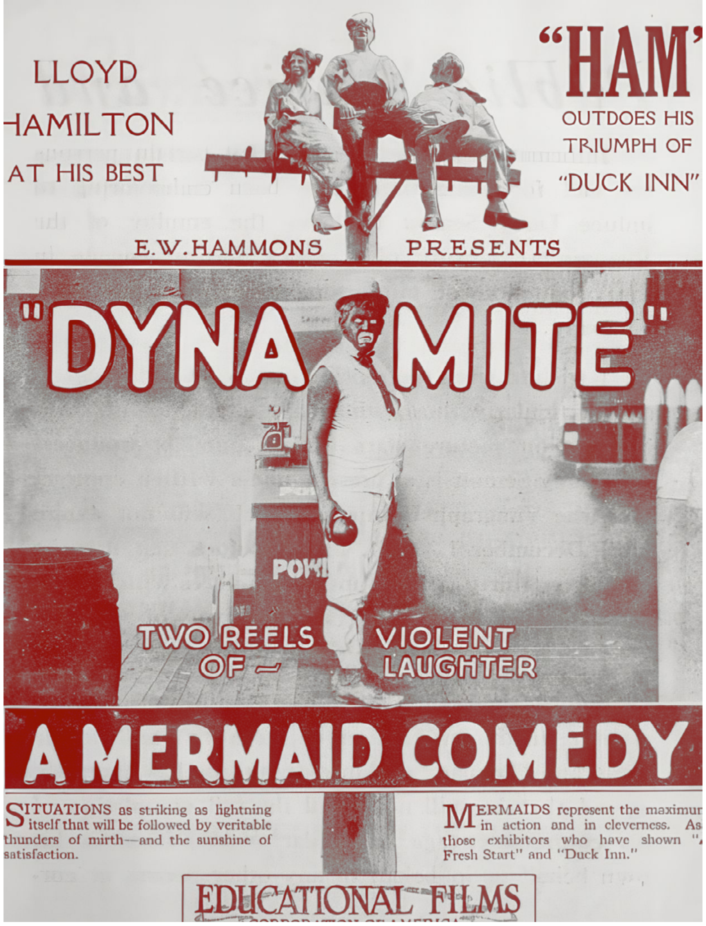
INTRODUCING a new brand in the two reel fun field, "A Fresh Start," first of the Mermaid Comedies, has set a new mark everywhere for laugh-getting.

With this record, "Duck Inn," second of the series, will find a warm welcome, and it is certain to establish a still higher mark. Lloyd Hamilton, with a following of thousands from his "Ham and Bud" comedies, will paralyze tens of thousands with laughter in this story of unusual situations and astounding action.

Mermaid Comedies are high speed laughter producers. Every one who has shown "A Fresh Start" knows that. Your competitor will not let you forget it.

EDUCATIONAL FILMS
CORPORATION OF AMERICA
729 Seventh Ave. New York

Duck Inn (1920) Lloyd Hamilton's
first Mermaid comedy


LLOYD HAMILTON AT HIS BEST
"HAM" OUTDOES HIS TRIUMPH OF "DUCK INN"
E.W. HAMMONS PRESENTS
"DYNAMITE"
POW
TWO REELS OF — VIOLENT LAUGHTER
A MERMAID COMEDY

SITUATIONS as striking as lightning itself that will be followed by veritable thunders of mirth—and the sunshine of satisfaction.

MERMAIDS represent the maximur in action and in cleverness. As those exhibitors who have shown " Fresh Start" and "Duck Inn."

EDUCATIONAL FILMS

Dynamite (1920) Lloyd Hamilton's
second Mermaid comedy

away and bury the "Ham" character forever. Mermaid released its first two-reeler *Duck Inn* starring Hamilton, on August 7th, 1920.

The second Mermaid, *Dynamite* (released October 20, 1920) is a wild comedy with sort of a dark, Larry Semon mode with exploding chickens that have ingested the title element and other going on at a TNT factory. Though it does become apparent that Hamilton is heading towards his overgrown innocent, the gags still take precedence as he gets a fish down his pants in what would become an early example of something that almost became a gag insignia with the comic: small animals getting into his clothes. The egg grenades that the dynamited poultry lay are much cause for consternation, but the short dissolves into a standard comedy chase, atop roofs and fire escapes, nothing any comedian who would work for Jack White couldn't have performed competently.

In *The Simp* (released October 24, 1920), there seems to be more of an effort towards characterization, which may be more of a budget-saving rather than a creative issue as much of the short has the "lark in the park" feel over elaborately and expensively staged gags. Ham is introduced as "A twelve o'clock fellow in a nine o'clock town", having trouble getting his flivver into the garage, finally driving it through his garage. He enters his home with pillows on his feet, no avail as his angry father awakens and banishes him from the homestead.

Fade up on Ham sleeping on a park bench, beside a lake, which he falls into when the sprinklers turn on. Marvel Rea plays the Girl, a Good Samaritan sitting on another bench reading as her dog is pulled by the tail into the lake by an apparently carnivorous fish. Slipper Elmer (Otto Fries) rescues the dog and returns it to Marvel as Ham disrobes from his wet clothes to dry. Of course, in typical Hamilton fashion, a fish gets in his pants, causing him to push Elmer into the lake and gets a beating. Ham meets Marvel, and sits and flirts with her on the bench, also tossing her dog back into the lake when he catches fleas on him, but the dripping dog returns, and Marvel asks him to "dry him", which he does by wringing it dry like a washrag.

Duck Inn and *Dynamite* had been directed by Gil Pratt, and *The Simp* by Owen Davis, but the Director of Hamilton's next two comedies would bring much of his own comedic expertise to the mix and, if not perhaps adding major flourishes to the development of Lloyd Hamilton's comic persona, certainly cementing the quality of Hamilton's Educational product in the Public's eye. Charles Parrott helmed these next two shorts for his friend and star, taking this work in between longer directing gigs like the Mr. and Mrs. Carter De Haven comedies for Paramount and afterwards the Snub Pollard comedies for Hal Roach where, within the year, Parrott would become the Director-General of that studio, then later one of its major stars under his newly christened name Charley Chase.

April Fool (released November 21, 1920) shows a marked step-up from Hamilton's first three Mermaid shorts, and he

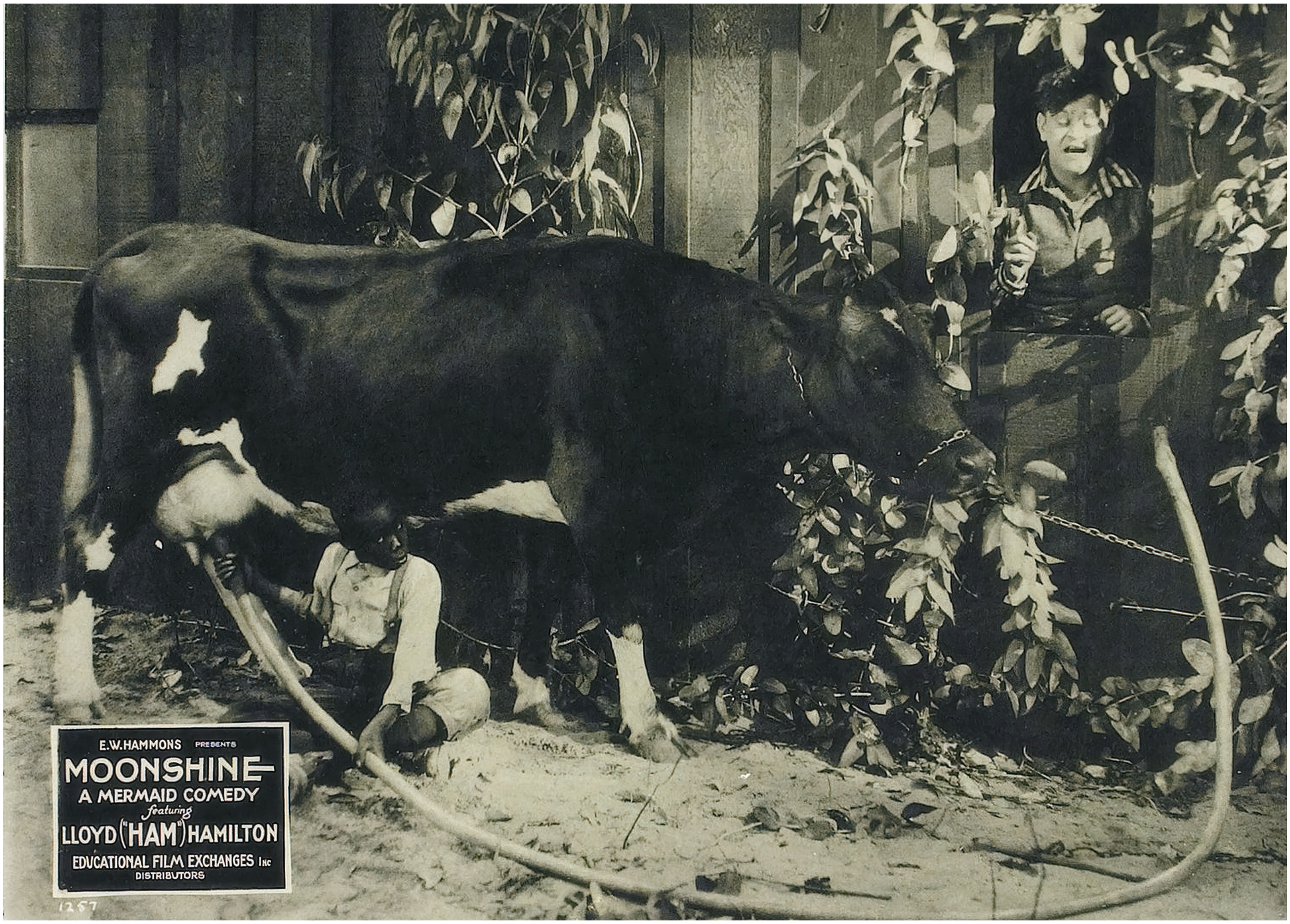
The Simp (1920)
Lloyd Hamilton and Marvel Rea

does continue to hone and soften his overgrown boy. The film is episodic in its plot construction, just as so many two-reel comedies that seem like two one-reelers spliced together, but one of Charles Parrott's greatest strengths as a Director/Comedy Writer was his ability to string together a plot from gags that continue to move the comedian from one situation to another and he does it beautifully here.

April Fool opens with Ham being the butt of a variety of jokes befitting the titled day, including a wonderfully shot and set-up routine regarding Ham chasing a wallet tied to a string unknowingly tied to Ham. This leads to Ham having to return the purse to a new leading lady Bee Monson, who is aboard ship leaving for a cruise. This leads to ham being shanghaied by evil sea captain Otto Fries and then a plethora of shipboard gags as Ham works as a galley-cook, hunting for seafood with a rifle out the galley's porthole, then shooting leaking holes in the boat causing the crew to abandon the sinking ship. Peppered with wonderful gags, *April Fool* moves well and has several surprise appearances by Director Parrott as well as a lanky and heavily-moustached sailor who bears an amazing resemblance to Stan Laurel, basically because he is Ted Jefferson, Stan's Brother, who was working in the Mermaid Comedies as a prop-man and supporting performer (he can be seen in *Moonshine* as well as a bearded hillbilly).

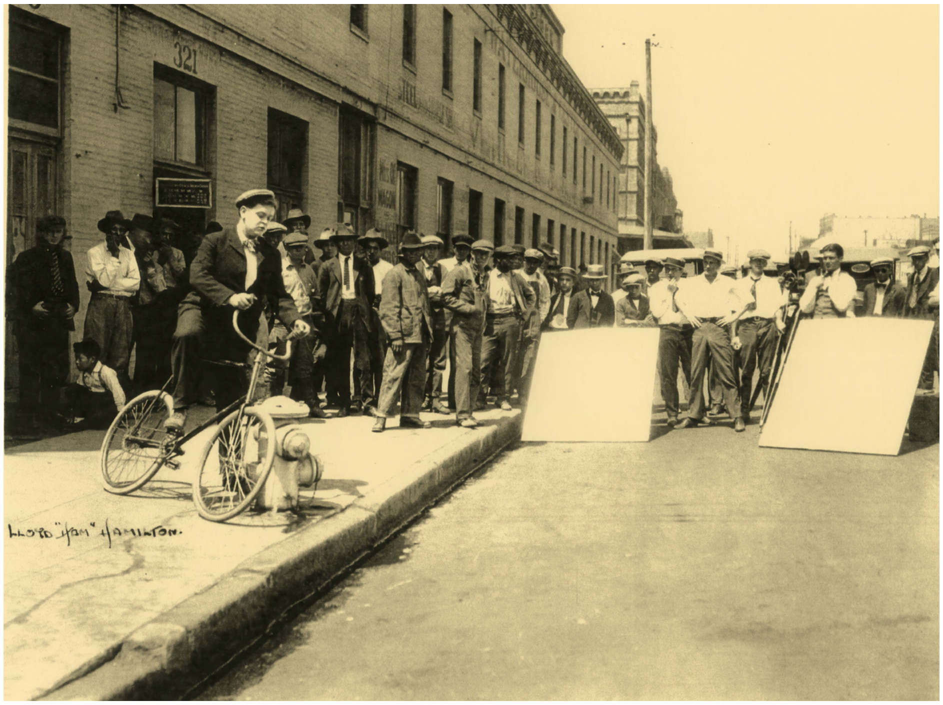
B.W. HAMMONS
Presents
MERMAID COMEDY
"APRIL FOOL"
DISTRIBUTED BY
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.
"April Fool"
A Mermaid Comedy
M-289

April Fool (1920) L to R:
Lloyd Hamilton, Otto Fries, Bee Monson


E.W.HAMMONS PRESENTS
MOONSHINE
A MERMAID COMEDY
featuring
LLOYD ("HAM") HAMILTON
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES Inc
DISTRIBUTORS
1257

Moonshine (released April 9, 1920) was even better, a wild and surreal little comedy of the life of Moonshiner Ham and his hillbilly family in their eternal was with the "revenooers". Ham is born during one of these shoot-outs, the stork actually racing the doctor to the cabin, as a full-fledges battle goes on outside, enjoyed by cheering crowds sitting on the roofs of the farm buildings, and a scorekeeper (played by Charles Parrott) keeps tabs on the killings.

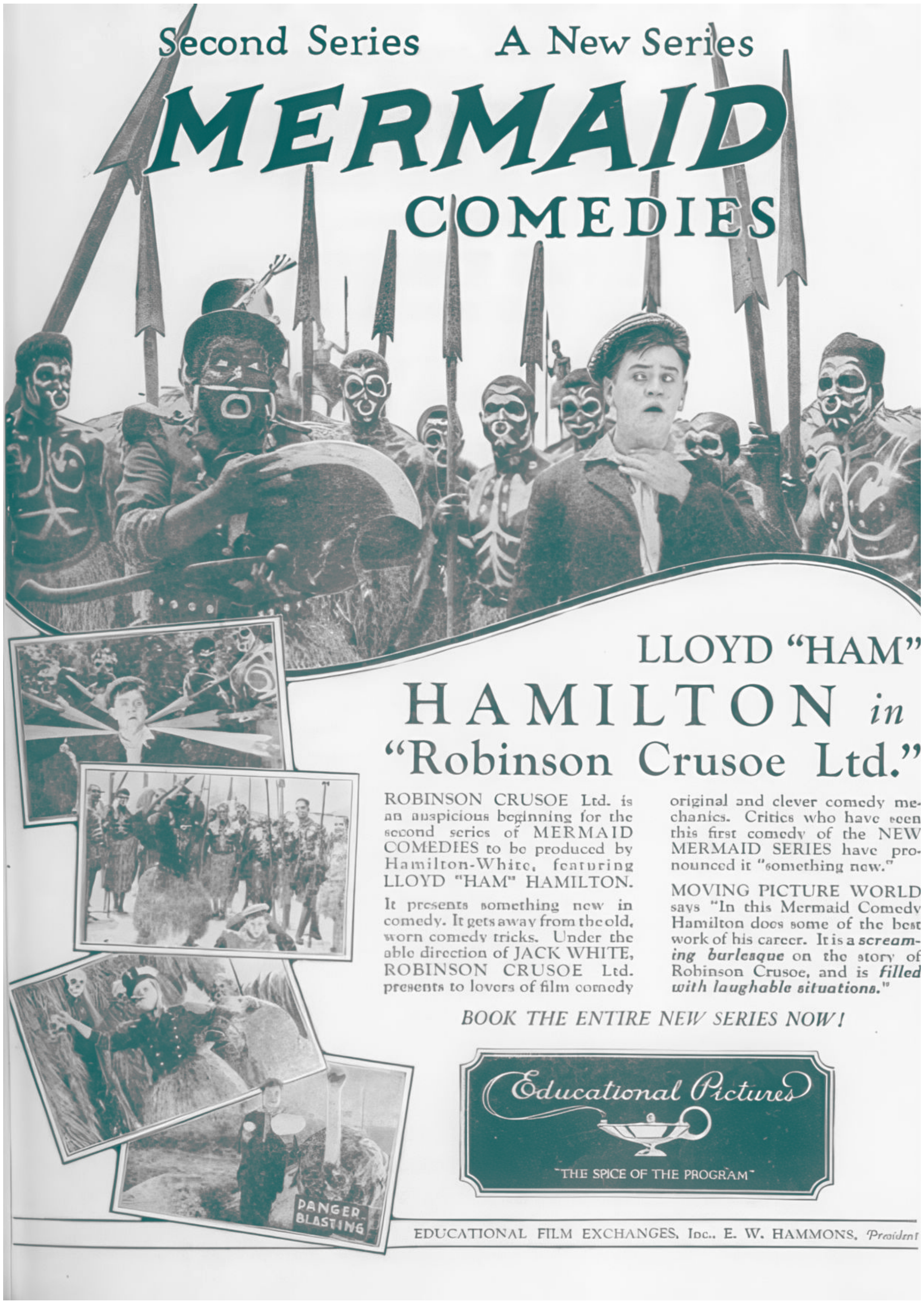
When Ham grows to manhood, he becomes the main bamboozler of the revenue men, also led by Director Parrott in unbilled part number two, and the various mechanical gags are deftly executed in the same fast-paced style Parrott would soon be using with Snub Pollard, yet Hamilton's own reactions and character touches begin to accent the humor in a way a more limited comic like Pollard would never achieve.


321
LLOYD "HAM" HAMILTON.

Lloyd Hamilton shooting a Mermaid Comedy in Downtown Los Angeles as Jack White directs him.

The Mermaids caught on quickly with audiences, and Hamilton was garnering terrific notices in them. As his popularity grew, Hamilton began to push more for control of his films, causing friction between him and White. Despite these problems, or perhaps because of them, the quality of the Mermaids continued to improve. The first release of the second Mermaid series *Robinson Crusoe Ltd.* (August 14th, 1921) was the film that pushed Hamilton over the top, establishing him as one of the most popular comedians of the time. Although the film seems to be lost, contemporary reviews are ecstatic. Motion Picture World called it "the best work of his career," and the film received praise from Chaplin and Keaton, making it the yardstick from which many following Hamilton comedies would be measured. The plot appears to have Hamilton shipwrecked, battling cannibals and an ostrich which lays exploding eggs. Stills reveal him coming close to cementing a trademark costume. His next Mermaid; *The Vagrant* (September 15th, 1921) does survive, and shows that Hamilton had not only found his costume and mannerism, but is definitely taking steps into Chaplin territory, combining humor with a deeper characterization and pathos. It is in fact, a blueprint for *Move Along*, employing the same thematic devices: Hamilton homeless and hungry, the cop keeping him moving, forever moving.

The Advisor (released November 20, 1921) begins with Lloyd conferring with Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan, but it turns out to be only a dream. Lloyd has just become a lawyer, but he loses his first case, a very nasty criminal, who then escapes from prison seeking revenge on Hamilton.


DANGER
BLASTING

Second Series A New Series

MERMAID
COMEDIES

LLOYD "HAM"
HAMILTON *in*
"Robinson Crusoe Ltd."

ROBINSON CRUSOE Ltd. is an auspicious beginning for the second series of MERMAID COMEDIES to be produced by Hamilton-White, featuring LLOYD "HAM" HAMILTON.

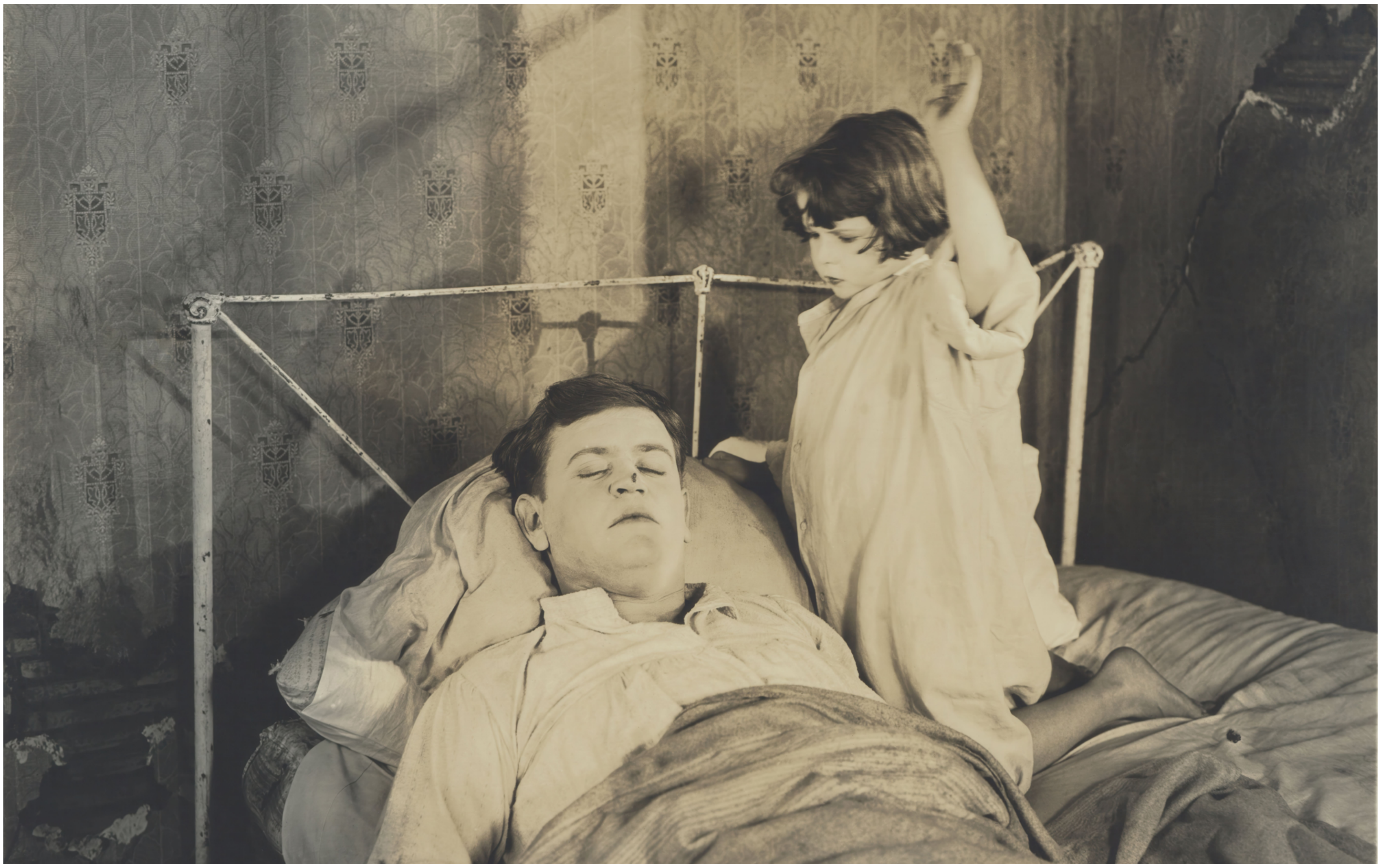
It presents something new in comedy. It gets away from the old, worn comedy tricks. Under the able direction of JACK WHITE, ROBINSON CRUSOE Ltd. presents to lovers of film comedy original and clever comedy mechanics. Critics who have seen this first comedy of the NEW MERMAID SERIES have pronounced it "something new."

MOVING PICTURE WORLD says "In this Mermaid Comedy Hamilton does some of the best work of his career. It is a ***screaming burlesque*** on the story of Robinson Crusoe, and is ***filled with laughable situations.***"

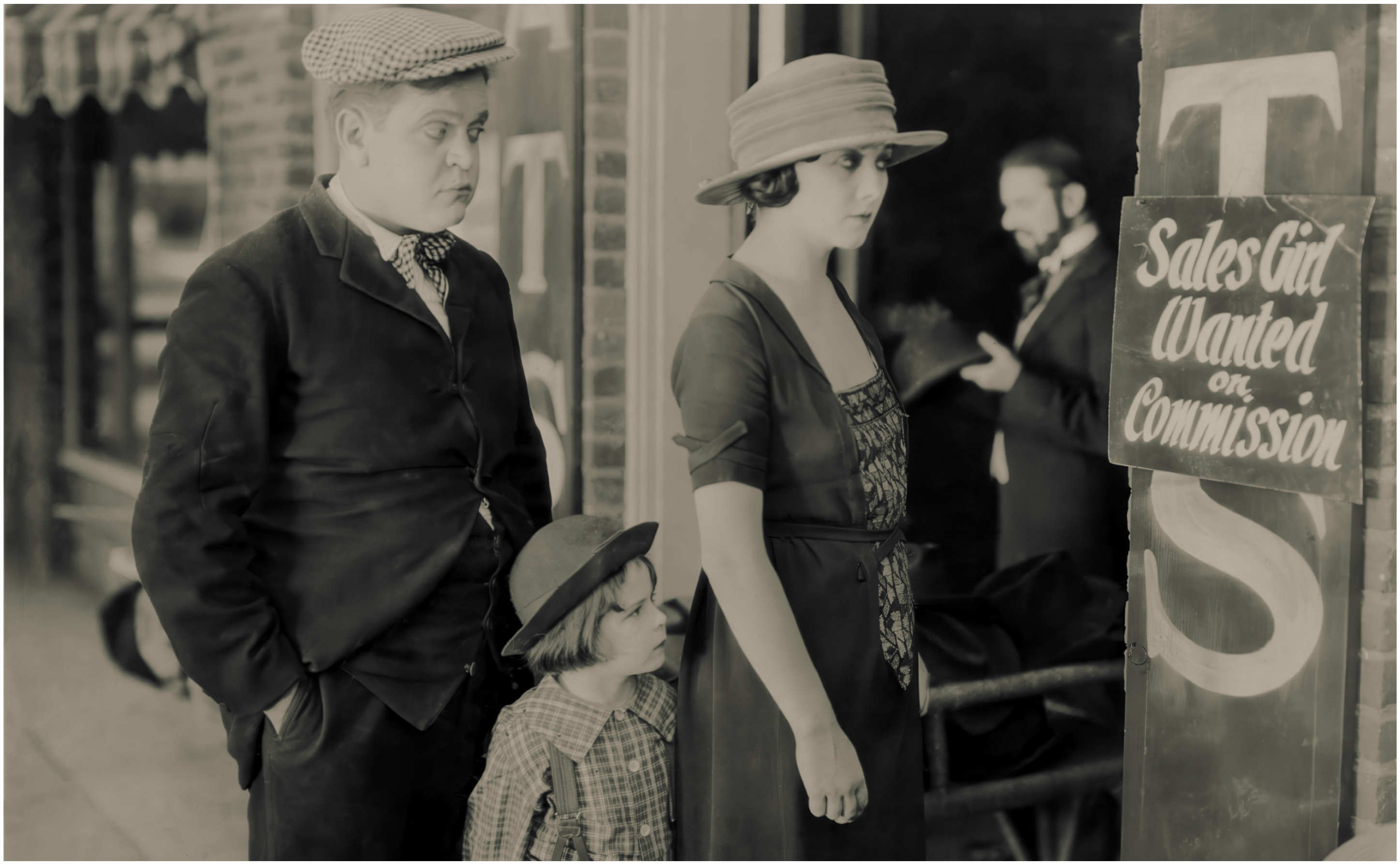
BOOK THE ENTIRE NEW SERIES NOW!

Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc., E. W. HAMMONS, *President*



ABOVE: *Rolling Stones* (1922) Robert DeVilbiss and Lloyd Hamilton | BELOW: *Rolling Stones* (1922) with Irene Dalton


Sales Girl
Wanted
on
Commission

THE CRESCENT
RESTAURANT
STEAKS CHO
FISH

Rolling Stones (released January 15, 1922) has Hamilton teamed with youngster Bobby Devilbiss as poor orphans trying to survive together in a two-reel slight channeling of Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921). They start the day in their meagre digs avoiding the bill collectors, later they see Irene Dalton working in a men's hat shop. Discovering she works on commission, they decide to help her increase her sales. Bobby perches atop an awning, knocking off the hats of passing gentlemen as ham rolls over them with his "borrowed" steamroller.

Afterwards, the hungry Ham hides Bobby under his overcoat and they go to a cafeteria. In the line, Ham looks over the food, and Bobby sneaks out from under the overcoat and snatches it. Both Hamilton and Devilbiss got nice reviews on their work together, and Hamilton would work with more child actors in upcoming shorts.

BELOW: *Rolling Stones* (1922) with Otto Fries

TRAINS AR LV
No 38
ESS
No 9
16
ITED
TRAIN No 9
TIME
ILLS

NEXT FOUR PAGES: *The Rainmaker* (1922)

YALE

YAL

The Rainmaker (released March 12, 1922) was especially well-received as a very funny comedy from start to finish. Ham is preparing to leave the village of his birth and take a westbound train. On the train, he meets a professional "rainmaker" on his way to a western town suffering a terrible drought. The rainmaker is mistakenly left at a railroad station lunch counter, so Hamilton appropriates his top hat and rainmaking rockets to impersonate the rainmaker and impress the rainmaker's pretty daughter, who doesn't want to disappoint the very dry town (it's so dry all its denizens are moving in slow motion).

The villagers have turned out a parade to greet the rainmaker, all wearing bathing suits and raincoats in expectation of the storm, the town's oldest resident has even brought his bathtub along to sit in outside as he awaits his first bath in weeks. Lloyd shoots off the rockets, but somehow starts a snowstorm instead. The angry-now-shivering townfolk chase Hamilton back to the train.

NEXT THREE PAGES: *Poor Boy* (1922)

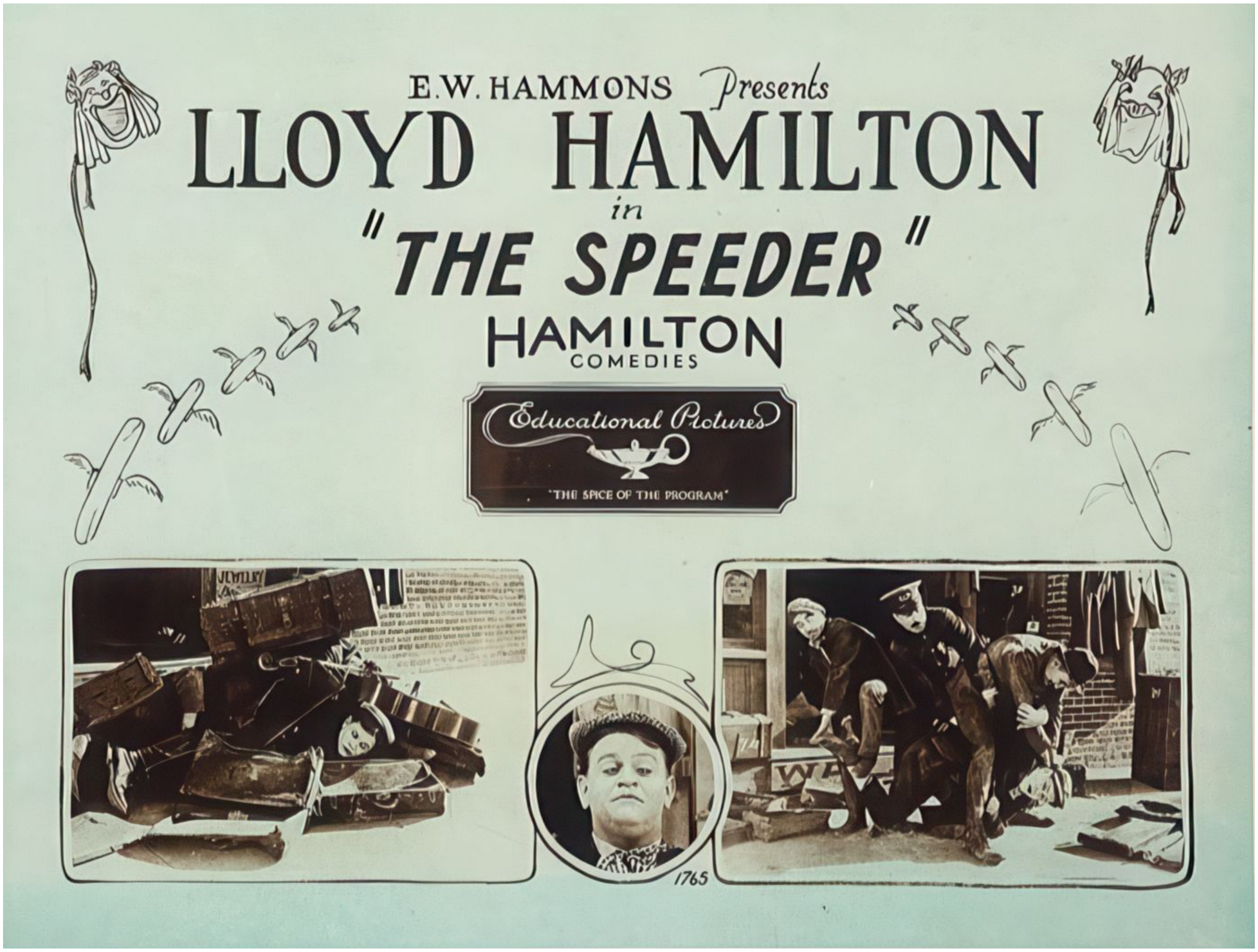
Poor Boy (released June 18, 1922) has Lloyd as a hobo accompanied by his dog. A friendly policeman catches him trying to steal a ride on a train and persuades him to find work. Hamilton visits the local mission and sings in the choir and sings in the choir and passes the collection plate. He then dresses in a starched suit and has to deal with its tight collar. Later, Ham plays the violin in the choir and a bird lands on his bow. He kneels on a carpet to pray, but a mischievous boy ties the end of the carpet to a horse carriage outside that drags the still-kneeling Hamilton into the streets where he is soaked by a fire hydrant.

From *Robinson Crusoe Ltd.* onward, Lloyd Hamilton had definitely come to the attention of audiences, critics, and exhibitors alike, with Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd all moving into feature films, there became a push to anoint the next great comedian in short comedies, which were at the peak of their popularity as part of movie theaters "full program". The shorts Hamilton made from late 1921 to 1924 pushed him to the forefront of those up and coming comedians, these were the films that gained him the admiration of his fellow comedians.

And with one exception, none of them are known to exist today.

To placate their new star, and reduce the problems in the Mermaid unit, Educational split up Hamilton and White after the second series, giving White complete control of the Mermaids and giving Hamilton his own production company. Though Jack White looked upon this split with some bitterness in later years, creatively it had to make sense to Hamilton if he wanted to explore a greater range of depth to his comedy. White's product was good slapstick, very good slapstick indeed in fact, but it would never progress beyond that.

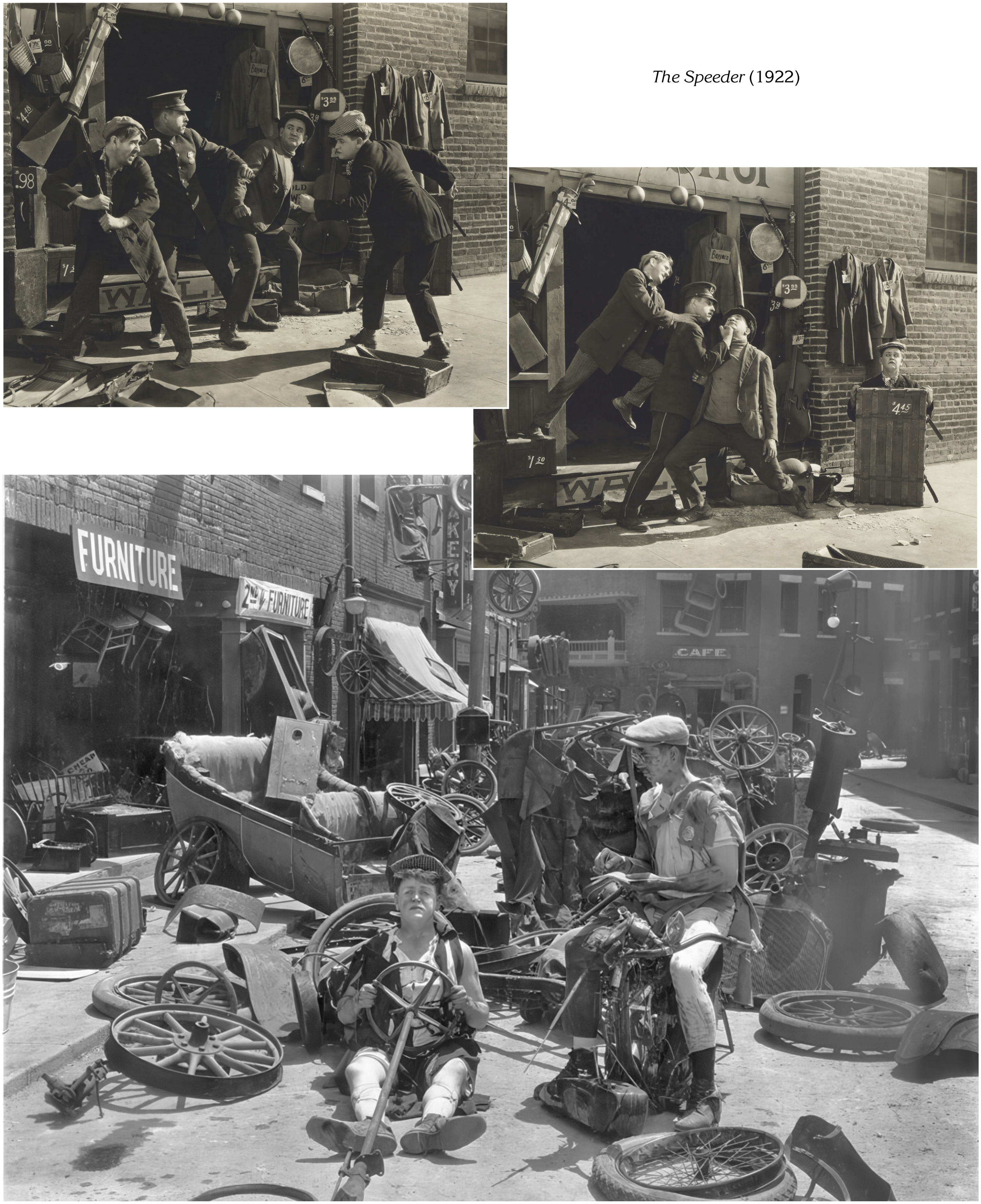
Lloyd Hamilton's comedies released over the next two years would find great praise from critics, audiences and exhibitors alike, his popularity also helped by the rise of growing distribution of Educational's whole product line. By 1922, Earle W. Hammons had aligned with and placed his films in the large Balaban and Katz chain of East Coast Theaters, which meant that Educational Comedies shared the bill with topline Paramount product. This would be Educational's greatest and most successful era, and Lloyd Hamilton would be Educational's biggest star throughout that whole peak period.



The new series of "Hamilton Comedies" opened with *The Speeder* (September 24th, 1922) and the new series showed Hamilton at his peak. Producing only six a year and with greatly increased budgets, Hamilton now had the freedom and control to stretch and perfect his character beyond conventional slapstick. His new production staff included directors Hugh Fay, Gil Pratt and Lloyd Bacon, among his writers a young man named Archie Mayo, later top director at Warner Brothers. Mayo had written several of Hamilton's last Mermaid comedies, and seemed to have a good handle on Hamilton's comedy style.

The Speeder has Hamilton buying a new car and then immediately having to deal with the fun of trying to park it. When he selects a space on the curb, another auto quickly rolls into it before he can move. This happens several times and he gets into fist fights with other drivers. Somehow, his gas tank is punctured and starts leaving a trail of gasoline as he drives. Of course, someone tosses a match and ignite it, and the fire follows Ham as he drives, burning a man's trousers and blowing up a fireworks shop as he goes by. Later Hamilton is chased by a motorcycle cop as he speeds, and he manages to destroy both the cop's motorbike and his new car.

The Speeder (1922) with Tom Kennedy


FURNITURE
2ND FURNITURE
CAFE
$3.99
$4.45
$1.50

The Speeder (1922)

NEXT SIX PAGES: *The Educator* (1922)

WELCOME + TEACHER
WELCOME OUR TEACHER
WELCOME OUR TEACHER

The Educator (released November 19, 1922), directed by Lloyd Bacon, was another especially well-regarded Hamilton comedy in which Lloyd plays a reputable young professor from Boston who heads west in search of new adventures, accepting a teaching position in the primitive community of Angelville. As he waits to get on a stagecoach to the village, he notices several men being taken off the coach on stretchers; they turn out to be his predecessors in the attempt to educate Angelville.

On the coach, Lloyd sits next to a young girl (Josephine Adair), another child actress who apparently had good chemistry with Hamilton. They share a fun scene in which they and the entire stage coach fight off an Indian attack. Angelville turns out to be a very tough town indeed where ignorance is preferred and guns are plentiful (America hasn't changed much). Ham's first day at school has him barely escaping the unruly "students", most over age fifty and armed, by hiding in a well. Raiding revenue officers come and pour barrels of moonshine down the well and onto Lloyd. The bootleg hootch gives Ham courage and he climbs out of the well with angry determination. As he walks into town, everyone he passes smells the eau de moonshine on him and follows. With the help of local cutie Ruth Hiatt, Hamilton's new leading lady, Hamilton "tames" the children by building an armored teacher's desk and faces down the town, which now has a permanent "Educator".

ANGELVILLE SCHOOL
DISTRICT No 1

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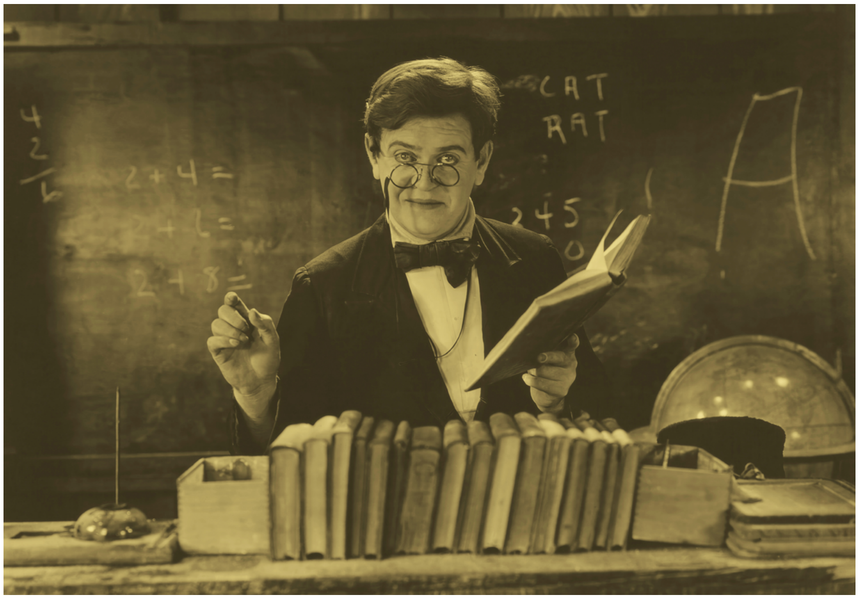
6
2+4=
2+6=
2+8=

“HAM”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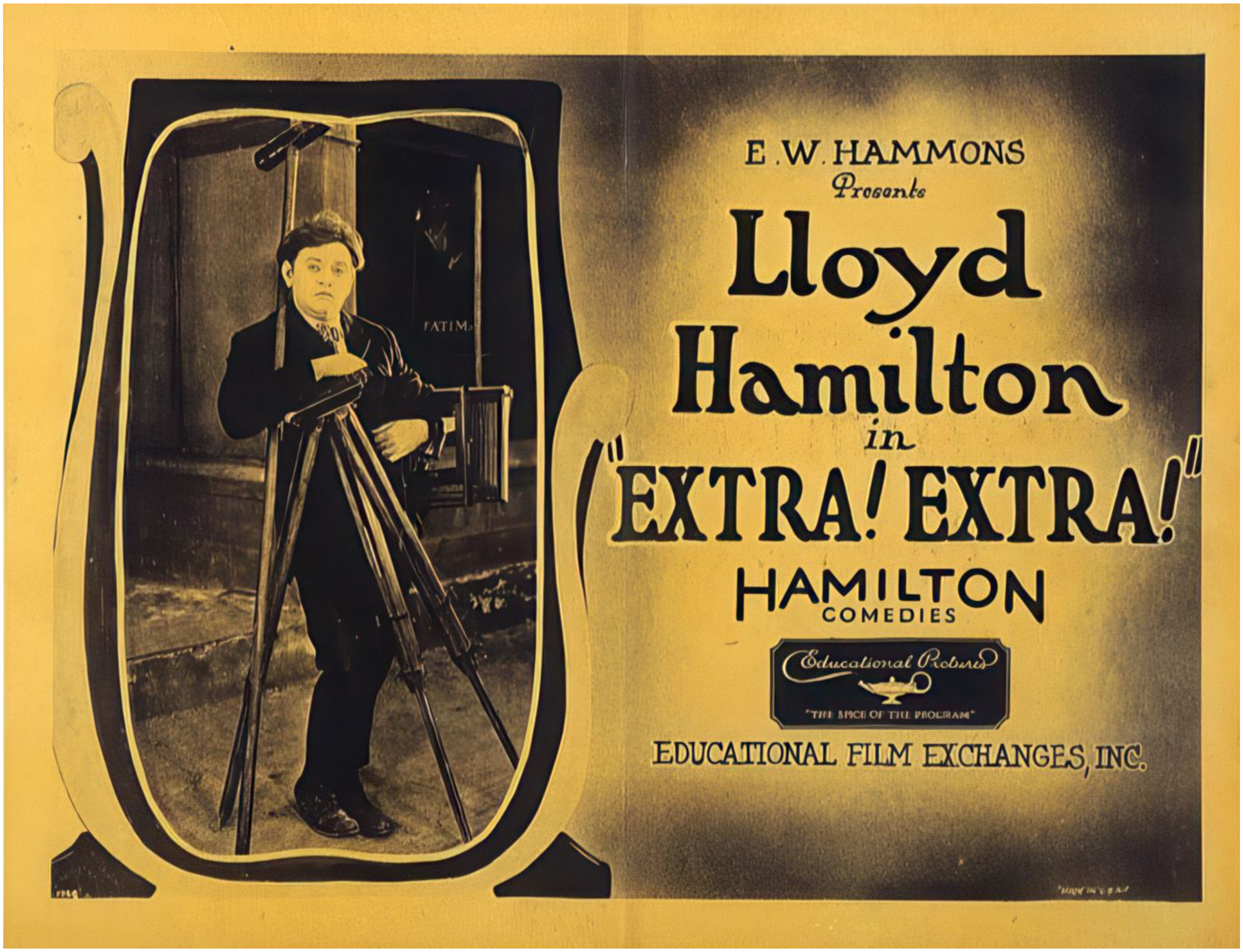
RAT
2+4=
245

“HAM”


E.W. HAMMONS
Presents
Lloyd
Hamilton
in
"EXTRA! EXTRA!"
HAMILTON
COMEDIES
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.
FATIMA

Lloyd Hamilton and his production staff: Lloyd Bacon, Hamilton, Gil Pratt, Hank Mann.

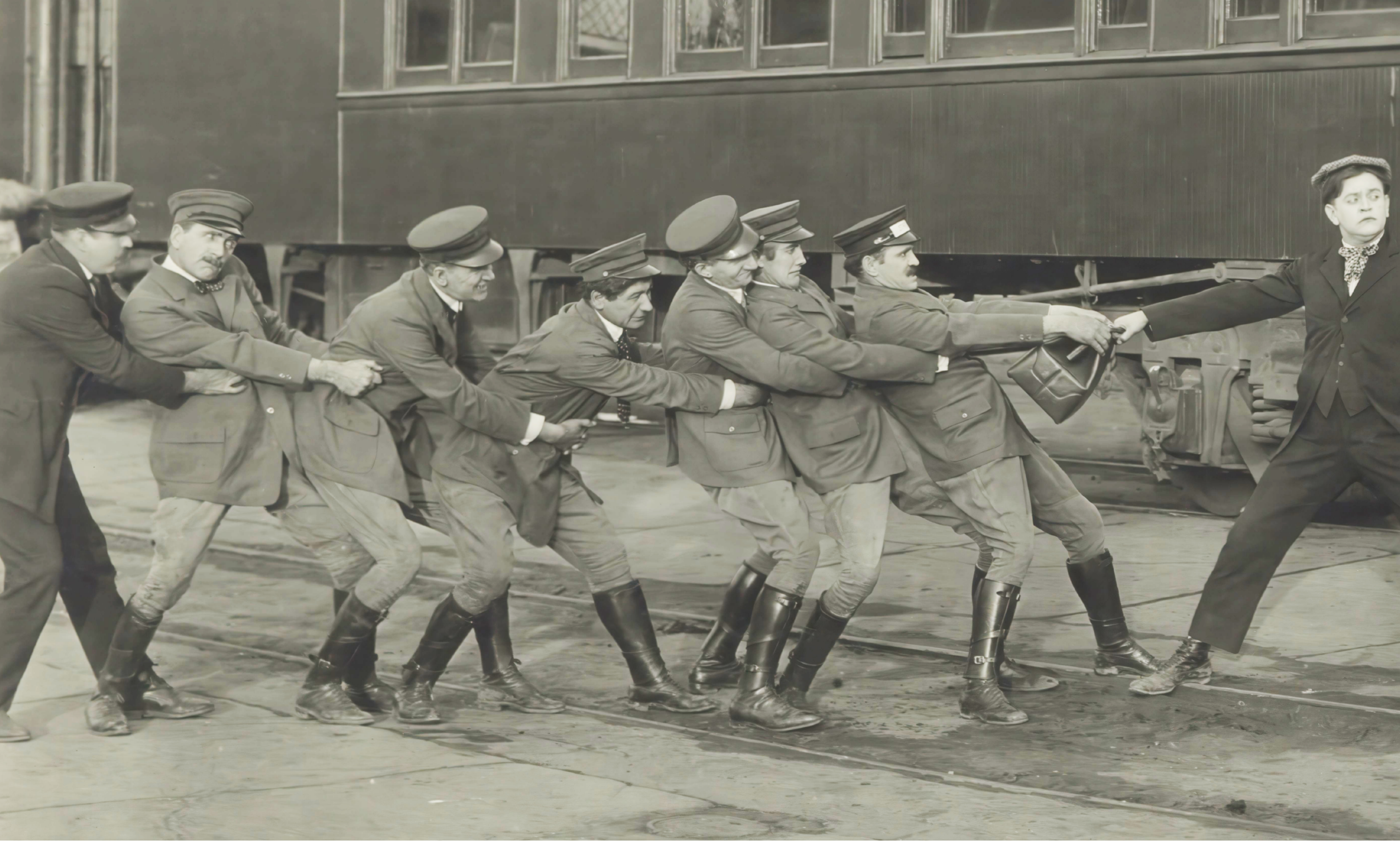
Extra! Extra! (released February 25, 1923): Lloyd has always wanted to be a newspaper reporter, and has been madly trying to document his experiences in the Big City. His typewriter has an oversized carriage that goes out his open window to the street, taking hats and other things off of passersby. The Police are looking for a mysterious bomber, and their only description of the suspect is a checkered cap just like the one Hamilton wears, and they zero on him.

Finally released from being a person of interest, Ham is hired by a reporter as a photographer. Following a policeman on the bomber's trail, Lloyd sets up his camera on an outdoor elevator shaft at a construction site that keeps taking him up to the roof when he's ready to snap a picture.

SET
$3.00

Coffee
Doughnu
15¢

ACROSS, ABOVE, BELOW, and OVERLEAF: *Extra! Extra!* (1922)



The theme of Hamilton being a farm or mama's boy leaving for the Big City continues in *Uneasy Feet* (released March 25, 1923) where a gang of fare-hunting cabbies play tug of war with Hamilton as he gets off the train. The cabbies manage to tear off most of his clothing, and a policeman makes him go to a haberdasher to get new ones. Lots of clothes-buying gags abound, and when the shoe salesman shows Lloyd a pair of shoes, a feather in a ladies hat behind him tickles his neck and makes him shake his head, making the salesman bring out hundreds of pairs of shoes.

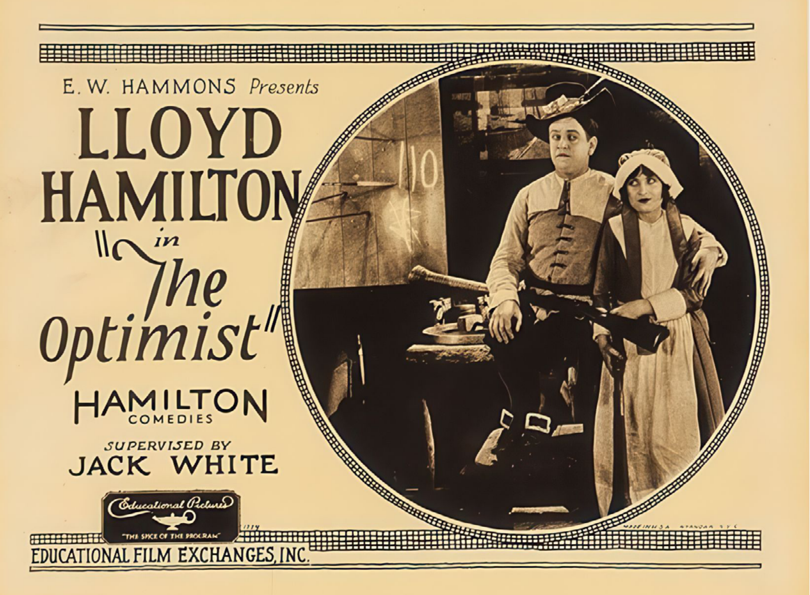
THESE TWO PAGES:
Uneasy Feet (1923)

The town of Philyburg is in the throes of a fly-swarm in *F.O.B.* (released May 13, 1923) At one point, there is a close-up of a horses back in which the flies, as a title announces, is holding "a toboggan contest". Ham enters with a fly swatter and proceeds to chase the elusive insects all over Dobbin's hide. Ham's dog (played by Buddy) is chasing a frog when he dives into the Philyburg reservoir, raking up the mud bottom and polluting the city's entire water supply. A crowd has gathered to witness the unveiling of Philyburg's new Fountain. Following the dedication ceremony, the water is turned on and the spectators are deluged with streams of muddy water from the reservoir.

Reel Two: Now Ham and Buddy are aboard a freight car in the company of four hoboes, amply supplied with whiskey flasks. Byplay with the hoboes and a group of baby chicks concealed under an overturned washbasin fill the last half and bring it to a close.

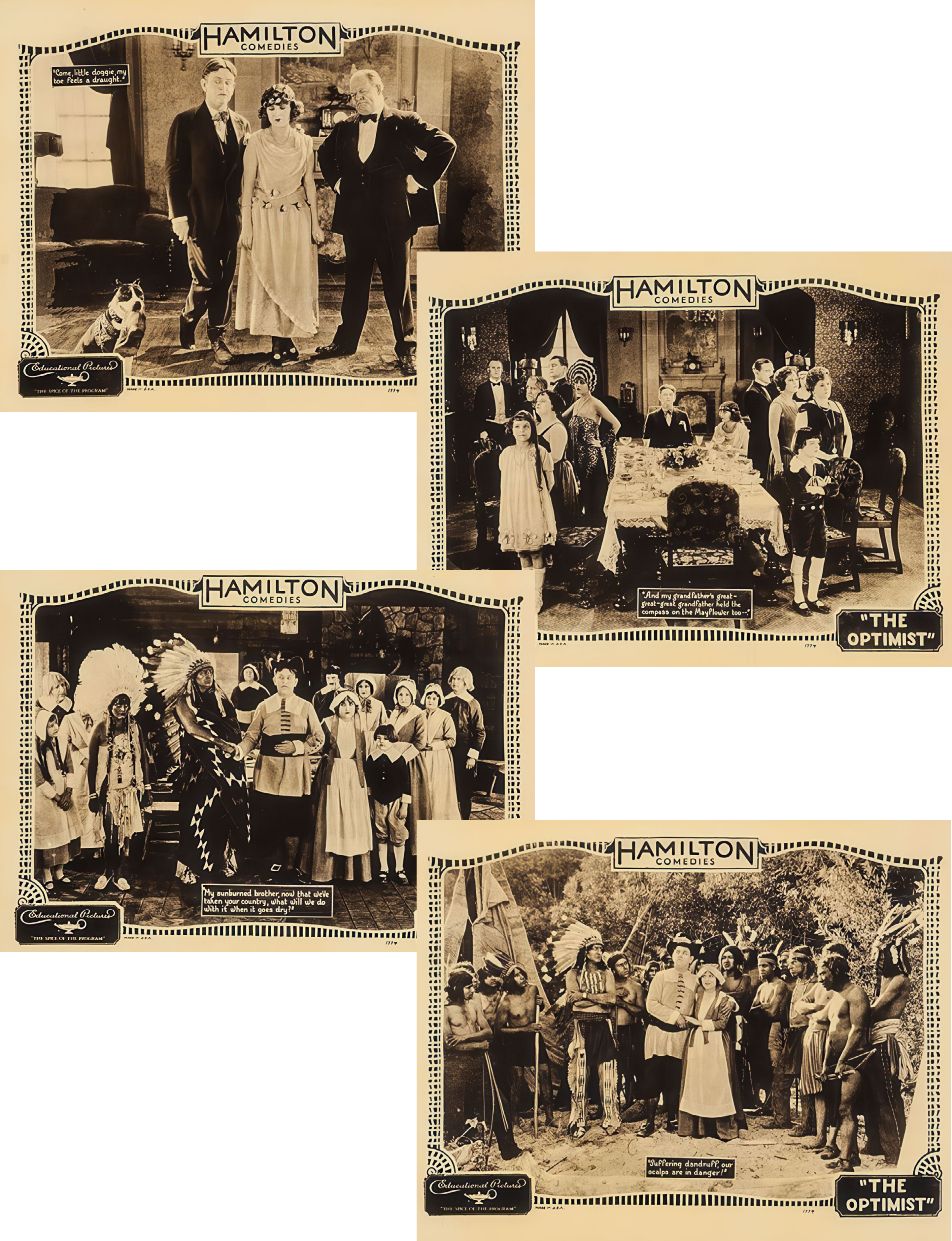
A print of *The Optimist* (released September 9, 1923) was preserved by the Amsterdam Film Museum. Lloyd is a Little Mary Sunshine attempting to spread optimism and a cheery outlook wherever he goes. Talking to a poor family in their dreary digs, Ham opens a window and reaches for the sun, accidentally catching a silver dollar that a pair of gamblers had tossed to the street. Lloyd pays little attention to the coin as he tries to wrestle a whiskey bottle from the family's drunken dad. Ham tosses the bottle out the window, where the gamblers find it, considering it an even trade for the coin.

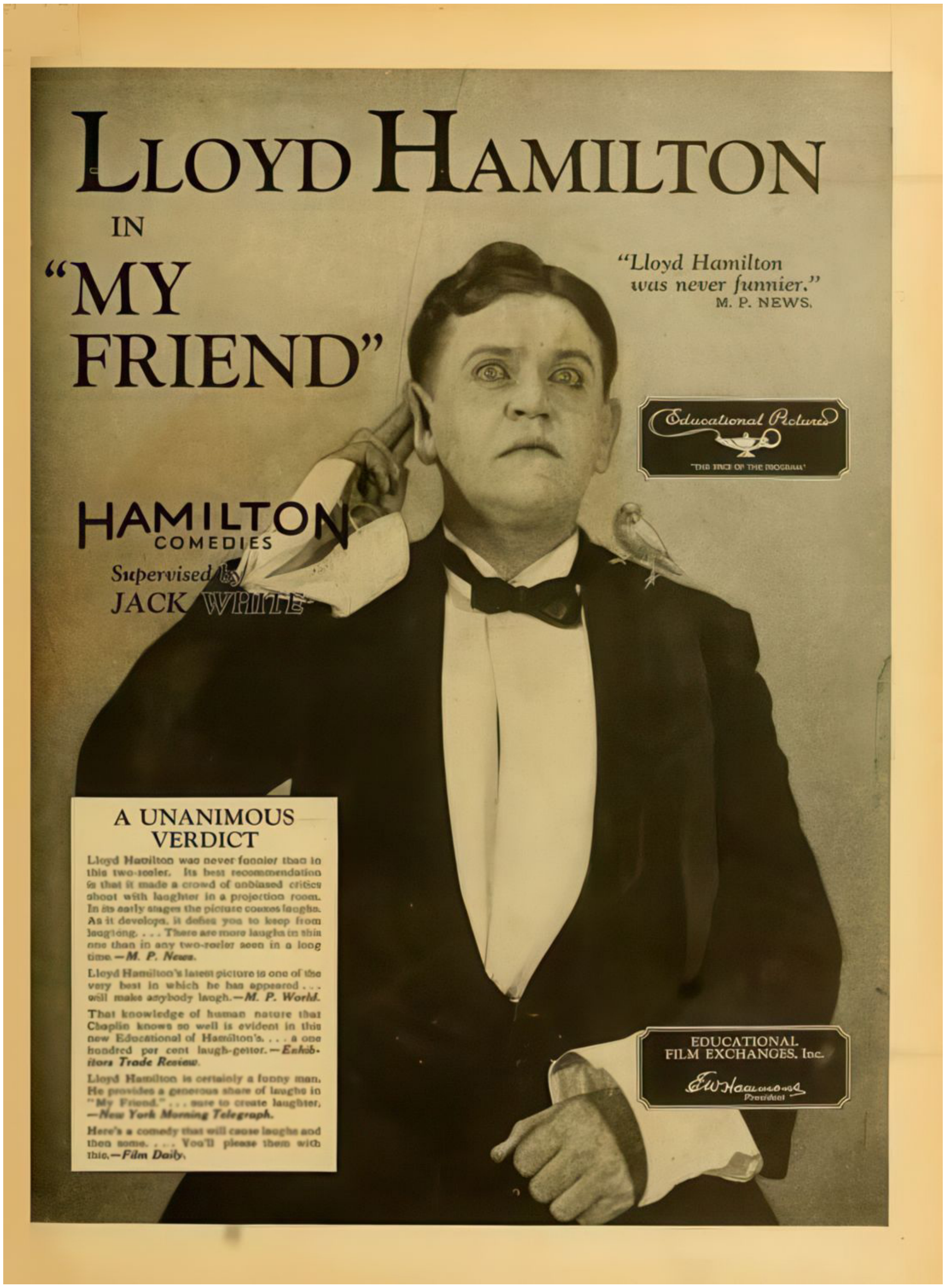
Suddenly a hailstorm of coins follow through the window and Lloyd hold a basket out to catch them. He hands the basket of coins to the stunned family. Then there is a flashback to pilgrim days where Lloyd's great-grandfather's philosophy of goodwill to men starts an Indian attack on a pilgrim settlement. No good deed goes unpunished.


E. W. HAMMONS Presents
LLOYD HAMILTON
in
"The Optimist"
HAMILTON COMEDIES
SUPERVISED BY
JACK WHITE
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.

HAMILTON COMEDIES
"So this is high society!"
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
"THE OPTIMIST"

HAMILTON COMEDIES
CAKE
So optimistic he still hangs up his stocking on Christmas.
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
"THE OPTIMIST"


HAMILTON COMEDIES
"Come, little doggie, my toe feels a draught."
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
HAMILTON COMEDIES
"And my grandfather's great-great-great grandfather held the compass on the Mayflower too—"
"THE OPTIMIST"
HAMILTON COMEDIES
"My sunburned brother, now that we've taken your country, what will we do with it when it goes dry?"
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
HAMILTON COMEDIES
"Suffering dandruff, our scalps are in danger!"
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
"THE OPTIMIST"


LLOYD HAMILTON
IN
"MY FRIEND"
"Lloyd Hamilton was never funnier." M. P. NEWS.
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
HAMILTON COMEDIES
Supervised by JACK WHITE
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc.
E. W. Hammons President

A UNANIMOUS VERDICT

Lloyd Hamilton was never funnier than in this two-reeler. Its best recommendation is that it made a crowd of unbiased critics shout with laughter in a projection room. In its early stages the picture coaxes laughs. As it develops, it defies you to keep from laughing. . . . There are more laughs in this one than in any two-reeler seen in a long time.—*M. P. News.*

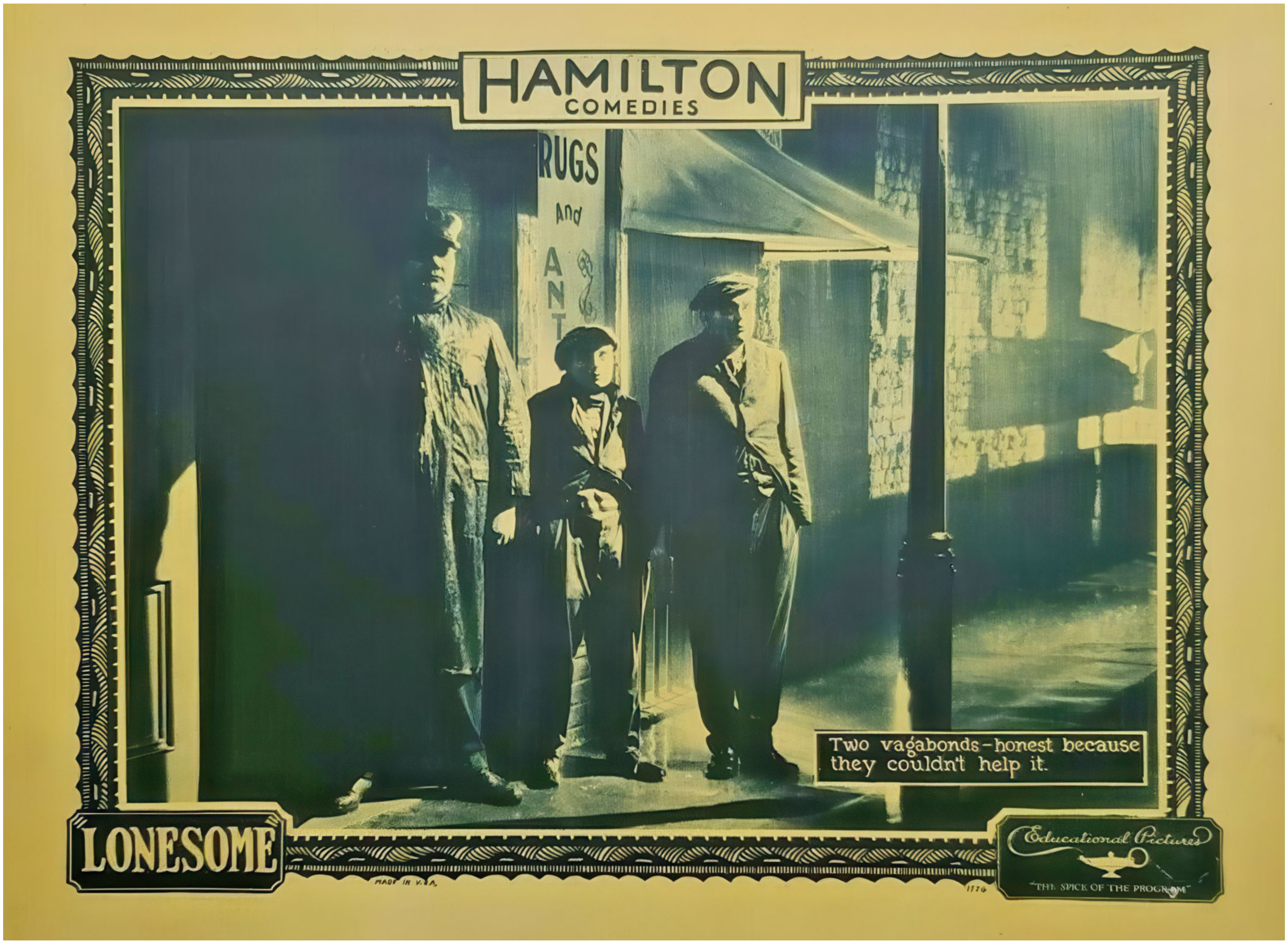
Lloyd Hamilton's latest picture is one of the very best in which he has appeared . . . will make anybody laugh.—*M. P. World.*

That knowledge of human nature that Chaplin knows so well is evident in this new Educational of Hamilton's. . . . a one hundred per cent laugh-getter.—*Exhibitors Trade Review.*

Lloyd Hamilton is certainly a funny man. He provides a generous share of laughs in "My Friend." . . . sure to create laughter. —*New York Morning Telegraph.*

Here's a comedy that will cause laughs and then some. . . . You'll please them with this.—*Film Daily.*

Lloyd is pursued by the neighborhood dog population in *My Friend* (released January 23, 1924), the first of Hamilton's comedies directed by a new Director, Fred Hibbard. Lloyd attempts to drive away from the marauding mutts through a rainstorm, but the pups invade the car through its windows, doors and roof. Later, when looking for work, Ham meets a man whose life he once saved during World War I. The man is now a millionaire and invites Lloyd to his home and a society party. Wacky things ensue.


HAMILTON
COMEDIES
RUGS
And
ANT
Two vagabonds–honest because they couldn't help it.
LONESOME
MADE IN U.S.A.
1776
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

Lonesome (released February 24, 1924) once again has Lloyd leaving his family home to seek his fortune with little success. Too proud to return home, he becomes a bum. A stranger asks him to join him for dinner, but after the meal the stranger tells him he has to leave for an appointment and gives him a dollar as he leaves the restaurant to pay the check. The dollar proves to be counterfeit, and Lloyd is beaten and ejected by the waiters. Lloyd's sister (Ruth Hiatt) is in disguise as she searches for Hamilton. She goes into a drug store to avoid a rainstorm, passing her brother outside, but neither recognizes the other. In the end, they reunite, and she convinces him to come home.

HAMILTON COMEDIES
"LONESOME"
Educational Pictures
1776-28

Lonesome (1923)

Reviews of the two seasons of Hamilton's self-produced series all commend Hamilton's mix of pathos and bizarre humor. Unfortunately, these films and most from his top creative period are lost today, but there is no doubt that Hamilton was riding high. He had a good leading lady in Ruth Hiatt, who would soon move to Mack Sennett and later co-star with Raymond Mckee in the Smith Family comedies. There was much speculation as to how long it would take him to jump to feature films.

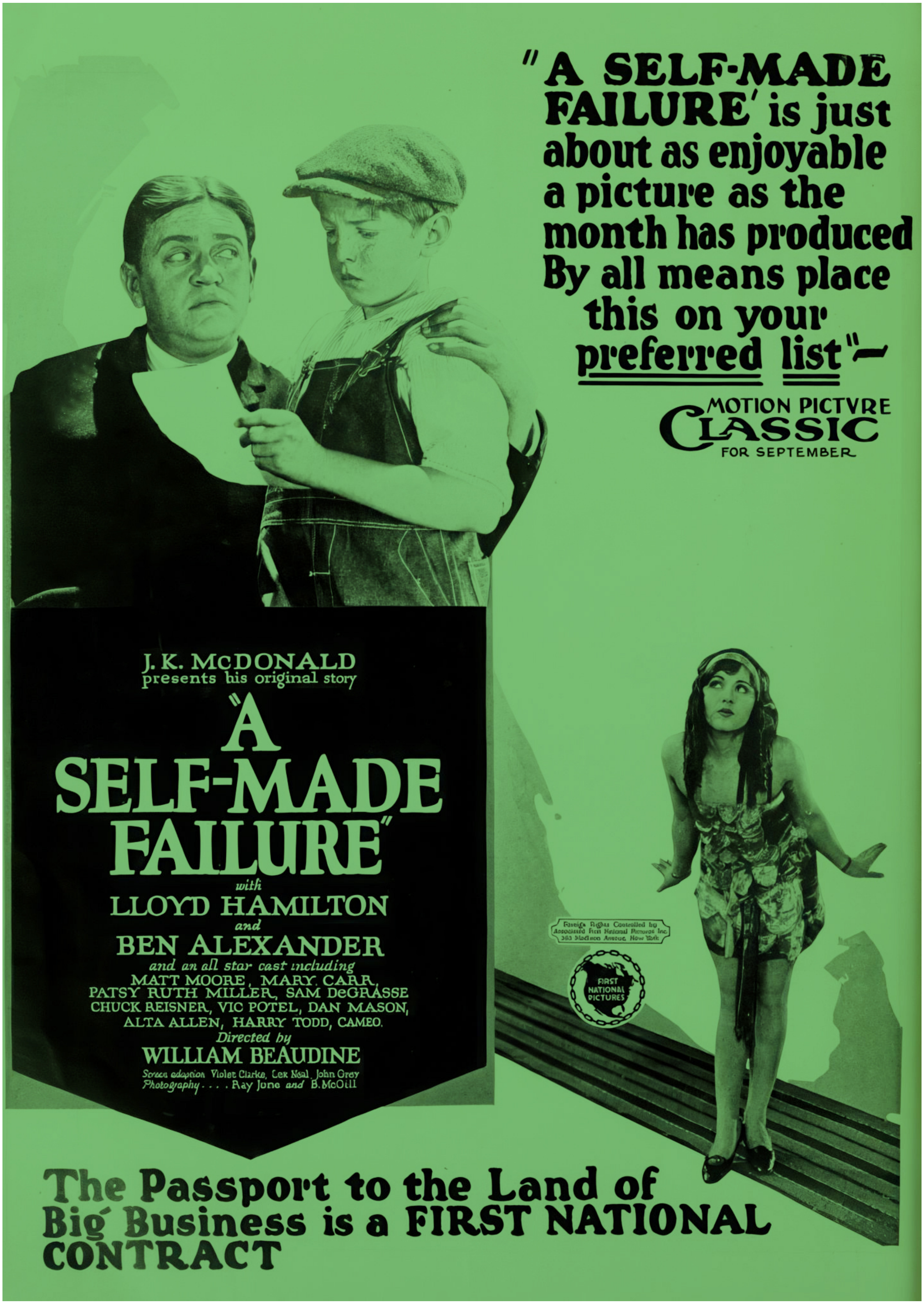
The jump came almost by accident. In 1924, D. W. Griffith planned a comedy to be produced at his East Coast Mamaroneck Studios staring Al Jolson. The film was based on a short story called "Mammy's Boy" by Arthur Caesar. Problems arose almost immediately when Jolson, nervous at working in silent pictures, walked off the project at the last minute. Hurriedly searching for a replacement, Griffith hired Hamilton, who jumped at the chance to work with the master director.

The project seemed doomed from the start. Just as Hamilton arrived in Mamaroneck to begin shooting, Griffith, disheartened after Jolson's departure, lost interest in the film, turning it over to his producer/brother-in-law, Albert Grey, and a new director, Jack Noble.

The result was *His Darker Self*, released by W. W. Hodkinson on March 16th, 1924. Only two of the original five reels survive, giving us just a taste of the original. Hamilton plays Claude Sappington, a would-be mystery writer cum detective, visiting the estate of his beloved (Sally Long) who is the Governor's daughter. Her black servant, Uncle Eph (Tom O'Mally), has been unknowingly shipping bootleg liqueur to a dance hall owned by Bill Jackson (Tom Wilson). When the dance hall is raided, Jackson frames Uncle Eph for murder, forcing Claude to don blackface and go undercover at Jackson's dance hall to prove Eph's innocence and wins the girl.

It is obvious that little has been altered in Jolson's original story to fit Hamilton's character, But Hamilton acquits himself very well in the surviving fragments. Several good gags, mostly taking place in the dance hall, are extant, though not always in their original context. One completely unexplained bit has Claude holding a cigarette in his mouth and the match suddenly bursts into flames and light the cigarette without nearing it.

ABOVE: *His Darker Self* (1924) Tom Wilson and Lloyd Hamilton



"A SELF-MADE FAILURE" is just about as enjoyable a picture as the month has produced By all means place this on your preferred list"—

MOTION PICTURE CLASSIC
FOR SEPTEMBER

J. K. McDONALD
presents his original story

"A SELF-MADE FAILURE"

with
LLOYD HAMILTON
and
BEN ALEXANDER
and an all star cast including
MATT MOORE, MARY CARR,
PATSY RUTH MILLER, SAM DeGRASSE
CHUCK REISNER, VIC POTEL, DAN MASON,
ALTA ALLEN, HARRY TODD, CAMEO.
Directed by
WILLIAM BEAUDINE
Screen adaptation Violet Clarke, Lex Neal, John Grey
Photography . . . . Ray June *and* B. McGill

FIRST NATIONAL PICTURES

The Passport to the Land of Big Business is a FIRST NATIONAL CONTRACT

A Self-Made Failure (1924)

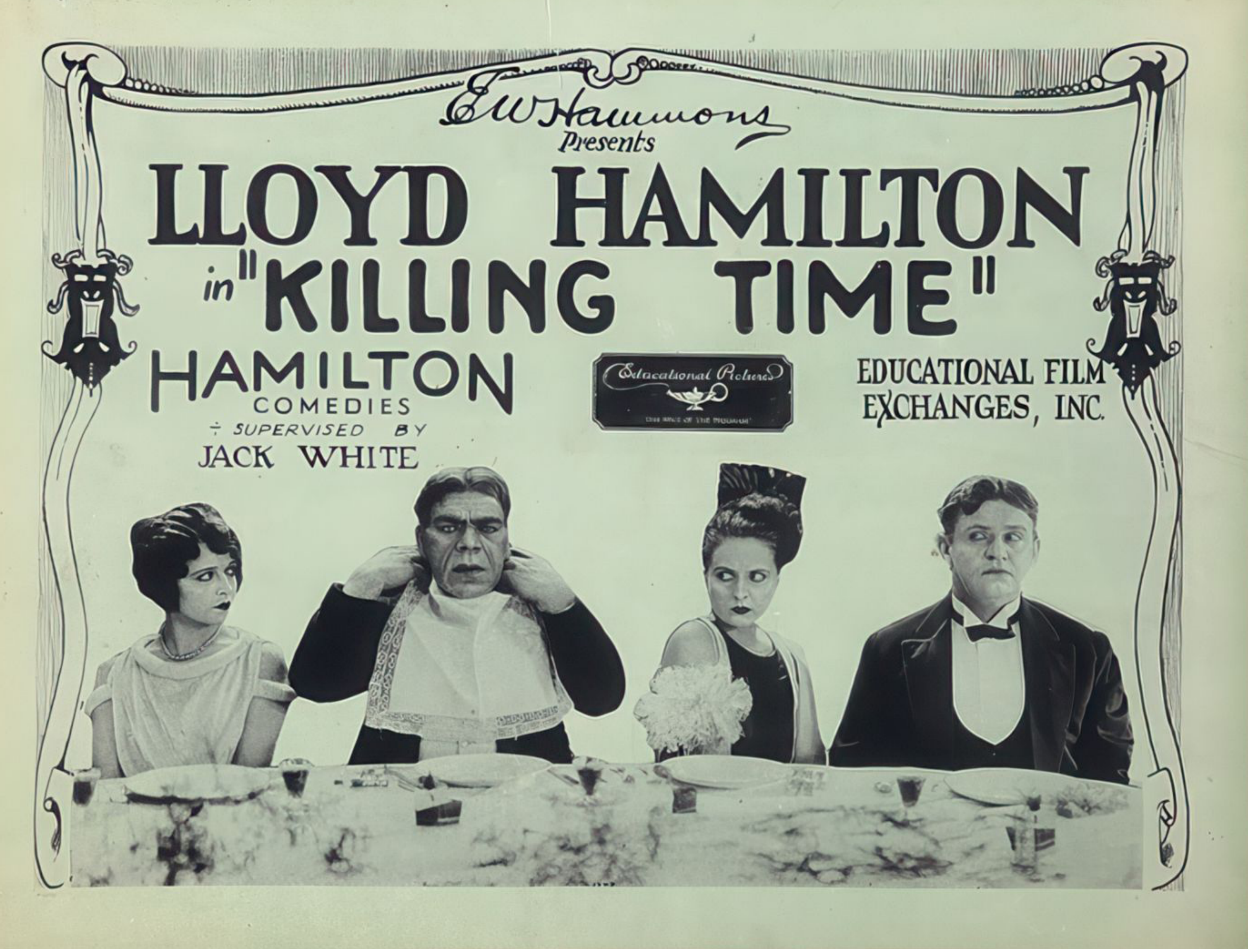
Although it was well publicized and received positive reviews, *His Darker Self* did tepid box office business. Three months later, Associated First National released a second Lloyd Hamilton feature, *A Self-Made Failure* (June 29th, 1924, produced by J. K. Mcdonald. Only the trailer and the cutting continuity survive today, and they both indicate, along with the picture's eight-reel length, a convoluted story that goes on too long for a feature comedy of the time. Directed by Hamilton's old friend and former Ham and Bud Director William Beaudine, with a script by Violet Clark, John Grey, Lex Neal and Tamar Lane, and buffered by a fine cast including co-star Ben Alexander, an impressive child actor who was being touted as the next Jackie Coogan, as well as the delectable Patsy Ruth Miller, Matt Moore, Mary Carr, Sam De Grasse, and good supporting comics like Victor Potel, Dan Mason and Harry Todd, things should have gone better for the film.

Hamilton plays Breezy, another hapless tramp, accompanied by Sonny (Ben Alexander) and a dog (played by the delightful comedy canine Cameo) who hops off a freight train into a small town built around a mineral springs resort operated by a kindly old woman (Obviously Mary Carr) whose threatened by the local hotel owner (Sam De Grasse) who has stolen ownership of the springs from Carr. Hamilton helps the woman by pretending to be a famous German Masseur, and brings in a load of new customers including a bevy of bathing beauties.

The continuity and trailer indicate a plot heavier on pathos than comedy, and there are too many threads to tie up, including the romance between Matt Moore and Patsy Ruth Miller. A number of tropes Hamilton had been using in his recent short comedies; working with kids, dogs, old people and making his character as pathetic as possible (Breezy is even illiterate) are brought out once more.

With recent films like *Poor Boy*, *No Luck*, *Lonesome*, Hamilton was definitely attempting to veer into Chaplin territory, but it may have been that audiences preferred the straight-gagging in comedies like *Robinson Crusoe Ltd.*, *The Rainmaker*, *Extra Extra*, *The Educator* and *Uneasy Feet* and now being forced to spend eight reels with an even more useless sad character may have just been too much to ask of Hamilton's fans and general moviegoers alike. Then titling the film *A Self-Made Failure* just may have been more of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In any event, the film failed, and it put a halt to Hamilton's move into feature films. This hit Hamilton hard, the first major roadblock to his upward career trajectory. He returned to Educational and two-reelers, where he was still a popular star, but the defeat of his feature film debuts took the wind out of his sails personally and creatively, doing further damage to an already rocky personal life. Lloyd Hamilton had always lived extravagantly, and in dealing with this setback, he began to abuse an already well-developed taste for alcohol.



The short comedies continued, but the tries for pathos gave way to more slapstick. The second reel of *Killing Time* (released April 6, 1924) directed by Fred Hibbard survives, and it is unfortunately a straight and characterless gag comedy like anything Lloyd ever made for Mermaid. Ham is a guest lecturer at a fourth of July dance social where meanie Dick Sutherland is making a pass at Ruth Hiatt. Ruth runs to Hamilton and introduces him to Sutherland as her date. The rest of the short is basically a rivalry between the two men over Ruth with gags interspersed like a chicken stealing a man’s toupee of the top of his head, then stealing Ham’s cigarette and smoking it until the poisoned poultry rolls over dead from the smoke. Hilarious.

The threesome then plays a ball-throw game at a black man sticking his head through a hole, popular side-show sport in those days, but the balls bounce off the black man’s head and hit both Hamilton and Sutherland in the face. Then ornery kid Jack McHugh steals the candles of a raffled birthday cake and replace them with firecrackers, and when Ham wins the cake and shares it round a table to the dancers, it explodes, covering everyone with smoking cake. Makes you split your sides a laughin’.

Later, when Hamilton begins his lecture, his handkerchief manages to catch on fire, and when he returns it to his back pocket, it makes him jump and jive while talking to the audience. Then a singing quartet made up of Ham, Sutherland, Hiatt, and an unknown spinster takes on a tune, a monkey (yes, there are a lot of animals wandering around the dance) knocks over a bottle with Larry-Semon-sized letters reading “paint” on the side and it drips paint on the quartet. Finally, a fat lady playing piano takes a bow and her rear end pushes the grand piano out the second story window and it crashes to the ground, and this is where the incomplete print ends, making one hope very little for the recovery of the rest of it.

Killing Time (1924)

Lloyd Hamilton and Fred Hibbard

On September 3rd, 1924, Lloyd Hamilton was arrested in his Laurel Canyon home on a charge of drunkenness, after neighbors complained of a party in his home that had apparently gone on for days. He had separated from his wife Ethel late in 1923, and she sued for divorce on August 8th, 1925 on the technical grounds of desertion. Hamilton began to develop a reputation as a hard drinking, all night partygoer, totally incongruous with his innocent on-screen personality.

The hard living didn't seem to immediately affect the quality of his work. The Educational Comedies of this period continue at a very high quality. Hamilton found himself working with two people involved with the Roscoe Arbuckle-Virginia Rappé scandal. Director Fred Fishback's career had been hurt by his involvement in the scandal (he had been one of the hosts of the infamous Labor Day party at the St. Francis Hotel where Rappé died), and had been forced to change his name to Fred Hibbard when he went to work for Educational in 1924, helming the Cameo comedies while also directing Lloyd Hamilton for the 1924-25 season. Hibbard brought back a more visual comedy-style to the Hamilton Comedies, perhaps even moving Hamilton away from the character-driven humor he had been experimenting with.

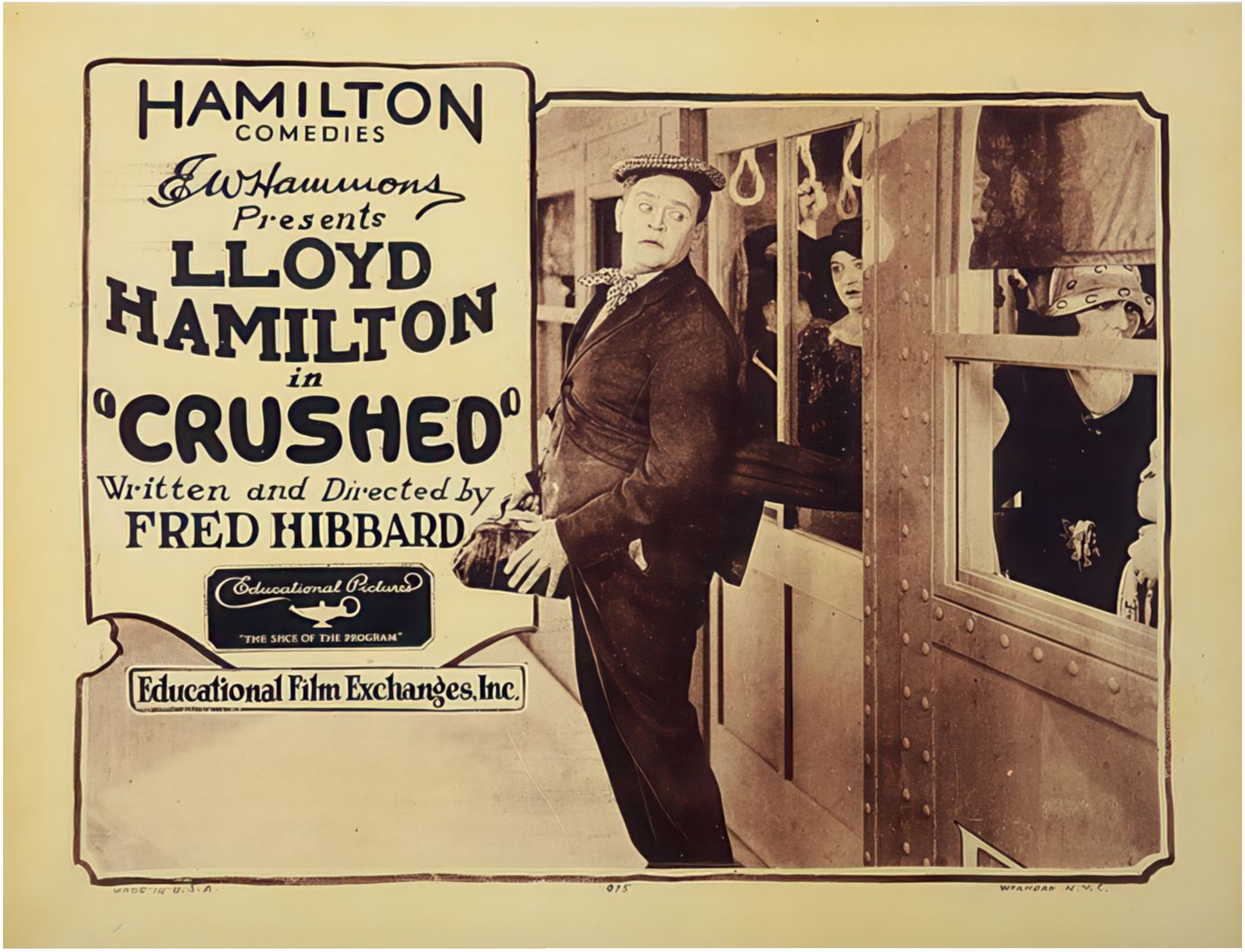
Of course, the other member of the Arbuckle Scandal that Hamilton would be working with was Roscoe Arbuckle himself. Arbuckle had turned to directing after his ban from the screen by Will Hays, and had recently completed a series of Tuxedo Comedies for Educational.

Arbuckle's pseudonym was William Goodrich, and he'd alternate directing Hamilton with other Educational stars like Lupino Lane and Johnny Arthur.

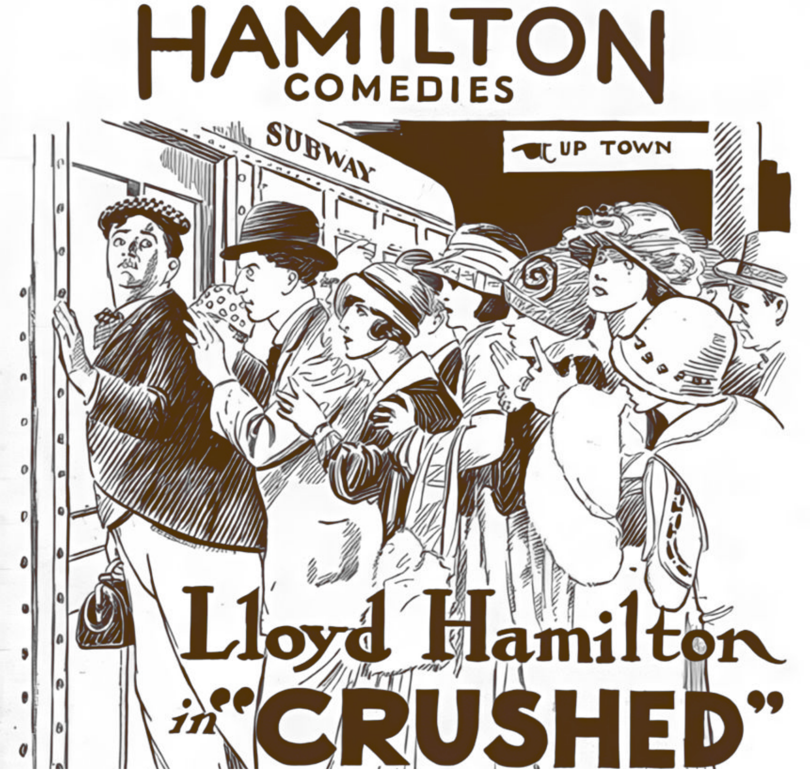
Jonah Jones (released September 21, 1924) pairs Hamilton with plump-comedienne Babe London as "The Hired Man and his Three Acres of Love" as the title introduces them, first seen out for a drive in Ham's old Model T, whose body shifts from side to side on its chassis due to Ham and Babe's combined gravity. Yet Hamilton's affections are about to switch gears when rich heiress Margaret Mason (Dorothy Seastrom) and her parade of chasing speed cops on cycles all fall into each other when she has a flat. Lloyd fixes her flat, blowing up the tire with his own lung-power, but her thanks to him is to tear off, dumping him into a mud puddle as she shoots up a mountainside, then chasing him back down to his farm as she is cornered and ticketed by the cops.

Margaret is going to be married off to the first royalty who'll have her by her Father (William Dyer), unfortunately, the handiest single royal is Dick Sutherland. Meanwhile, Lloyd shows up at Margaret's Dad's mansion to return her purse, constantly annoying her Dad by ringing the doorbell. Babe has followed Lloyd to the mansion, and she helps him get up a ladder and climb into Margaret's bedroom to return the purse. After the ladder sinks into the flowerbed, Ham pole-vaults into the window, causing babe to crash the party below and tell Daddy, "My Fella's in your Daughter's room.". The confusion and consternation ends in a car chase as the comedy fades out.

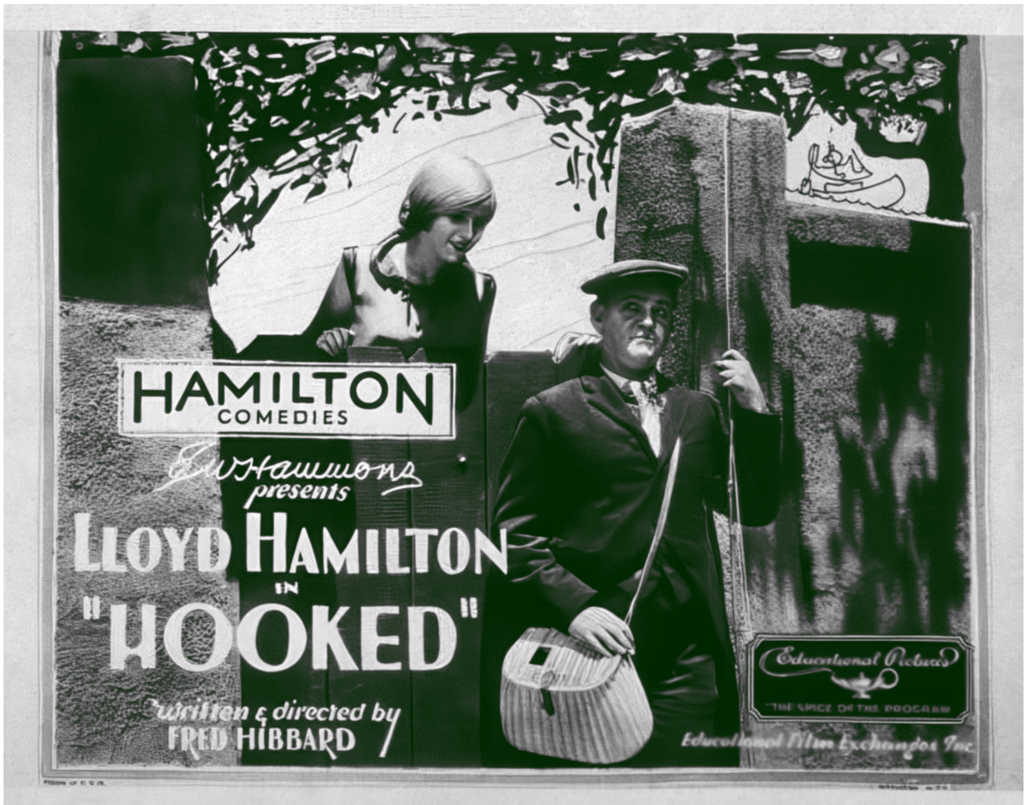
Going East (1924) Lloyd with Josephine Crowell and kids


HAMILTON
COMEDIES
E.W. Hammons
Presents
LLOYD
HAMILTON
in
"CRUSHED"
Written and Directed by
FRED HIBBARD
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.

In *Crushed* (November 23rd, 1924), Hamilton is an inventor of gadgets, like a combination umbrella-mosquito net. Forced to marry Amazon Blanche Payson and her horrible family, he spends their honeymoon night fixing the roof of their home during a raging storm. The roof is blown away, carrying Lloyd over the city in an image worthy of "Dreams Of A Rarebit Friend" for all its weirdness.


HAMILTON
COMEDIES
SUBWAY
UP TOWN
Lloyd Hamilton
in "CRUSHED"

Hooked (February 8th, 1925) also survives. Hamilton takes off for a fishing trip, helping his cross-eyed mother thread a needle before he leaves. Arriving at the stream, he annoys a fat fellow fisherman by catching a dozen fish at once, then losing them out the hole in his fishing pouch. Returning home, he stops to visit his girlfriend, who straightens his hair and arranges his pocket handkerchief, he quickly musses up his hair again as she turns away. At some point, a lively squirrel invades Ham's suit, and once again begins the running gag causing Hamilton to do the St. Vitus dance.


HAMILTON
COMEDIES
E.W. Hammons
presents
LLOYD HAMILTON
IN
"HOOKED"
written & directed by
FRED HIBBARD
Educational Pictures
THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM
Educational Film Exchanges Inc

HAMILTON
COMEDIES
"THE MOVIES"
692-15
Educational Pictures
THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM

The Movies (1924) Roscoe Arbuckle directs Lloyd Hamilton

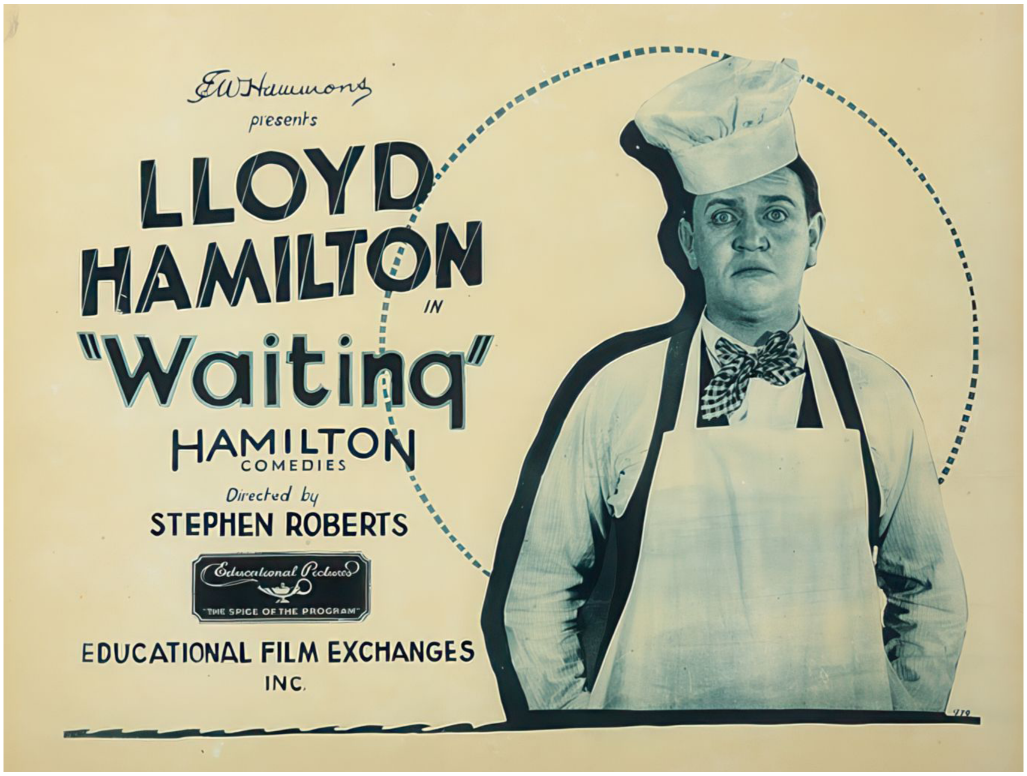
Roscoe Arbuckle directed *The Movies* (October 4th, 1925), a clever Hollywood satire in which country boy Lloyd joins the movie business as a double for --- Lloyd Hamilton! The film opens with a fantastic gag as Hamilton bids his parents goodbye, heeding their warnings of the dangerous big city, takes two steps, and is in the big city. Arbuckle was a great comedy director, and *The Movies* is filmed with excellent sight gags. It is a pity he didn't work with Hamilton more often in the silent era. Little did the two comedians know how much they would have in common.

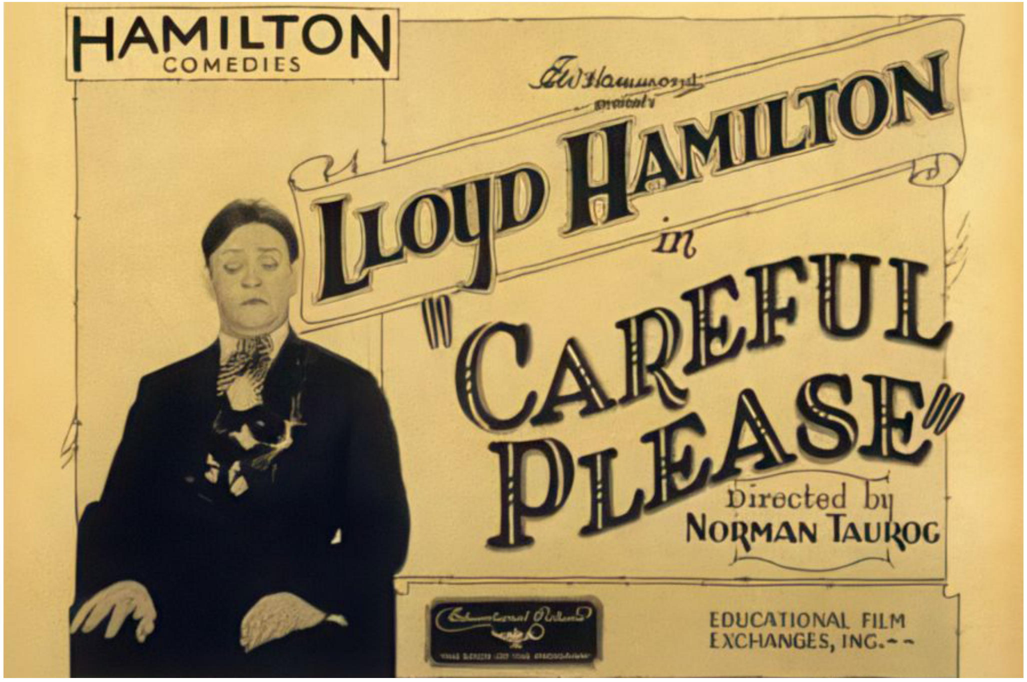
Sadly, Fred Fishback/ Hibbard died in 1925 at the way too early age of 31 and the remainder of Hamilton's 1925 season were handled by Hugh Fay, Stephen Roberts, and Roscoe Arbuckle before a new Director, Norman Taurog, was assigned to the Hamilton comedies. Taurog was certainly a talented Director, who had started as a youngster with Henry Lehrman's Sunshine Comedies just as Jack White had. Taurog had them moved over to Vitagraph to work with Larry Semon in 1920, and had even earned co-writing and co-directing credits working with him.

Jack White had hired Taurog in 1924 and had put him to work on the Mermaid Comedies. Though by this time, Hamilton's comedies were essentially a separate and autonomous unit at Educational, they were still under jack White's general supervision, as were the Mermaid, Cameo, Juvenile, and the new Lupino Lane series that started in 1925 (Hamilton made a cameo appearance in Lane's 1926 comedy *Movieland*), so White assigned Taurog to helm the Hamilton Comedies for the 1925-26 season. Though Norman Taurog was a very capable comedy director, the years with Henry Lehrman and Larry Semon had indeed rubbed off on him, and his specialty was more for fast-paced action and slapstick than refined, character-driven visual humor (Taurog's 1925 Mermaid, *Fast And Furious* starring Lige Conley, is basically a Larry Semon comedy without Larry Semon), so perhaps helming Lloyd Hamilton two-reelers was not the most perfect fit for Director and Comedian.

Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

Half a Hero (1925)


E.W. Hammons
presents
LLOYD
HAMILTON
IN
"Waiting"
HAMILTON
COMEDIES
Directed by
STEPHEN ROBERTS
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES
INC.



The first Taurog/Hamilton collaboration was *Careful Please* (released February 7, 1926), which starts off promisingly with Hamilton as a collection agent sent to a rough neighborhood to repossess the roughest neighborhood dweller Dick Sutherland's furniture. Sutherland's equally rough spouse is battleax Louise Carver (their progeny is seen sitting in a high-chair stropping a razor), who greets Ham with a sizeable rolling pin, but Lloyd is not to be cowed. He throws all of the Sutherland Family furniture out their second-story window into the street, just in time to hit the returning Mr. Sutherland with the descending piano.

The apartment now wall-to wall empty, Lloyd returns to the street where he shares a laugh with Sutherland over the repossessed furniture----Until he realizes its Sutherland's. Then a chase results with Sutherland calling his street pals upstairs to beat up Hamilton. A brawl ensues in the apartment, but all of the thugs manage to beat each other up while Lloyd sits by the sidelines and watches. Brawl over, and the apartment is now strewn with unconscious thuggery, including Sutherland.

At this point, a rich heiress that Dick had casually kidnapped emerges from their bedroom, thinking Lloyd has saved her. She takes her new hero to the family mansion for his reward, which includes lunch and amorous couch-sitting. While eating a sardine sandwich, Ham manages to drop the fish into his shirt and pants cuff, which attracts a litter of kittens who then invade Hamilton's clothes of course. The heiress wants Lloyd to kiss her, but he is shy, then her jealous guardian (Theodore Lorch), shows up and tosses Ham out of the mansion.

On the street, Lloyd runs into two old friends (Eddie Boland and Stanley Blystone), and he tells them his troubles and they respond, "let's drive down the block and think it over", which they do — exactly, even to sitting in the car with the window shades down (cars had window shades then — I guess) while all three do their impression of "The Thinker". They have parked their car beside a high-rise where workers are trying to move a piano up the side of the building, but somehow they manage to hook onto the car instead, which, due to those handy window shades, Hamilton and his friends are completely oblivious, continuing to sit in the car, chins in hands.

So finally, Hamilton tells Blystone to get out and crank the car. Stanley gets out and falls several stories to the ground, fortunately bouncing off bedsprings conveniently placed in the back of a truck. Then Boland says he's going out for a cigarette, his fortunately placed cushion is a black woman with laundry.

Lloyd stays put in the car, as a windstorm starts rocking it back and forth. Getting seasick (or airsick), Ham leans out the window and falls out of the sedan, now hanging on to the chassis by his toes. He climbs onto the door of the car as it crashes through a window, drives down several flights of stairs, through the lobby and out the entrance into the street again where the car then collapses Hal Roach-style. Fadeout.

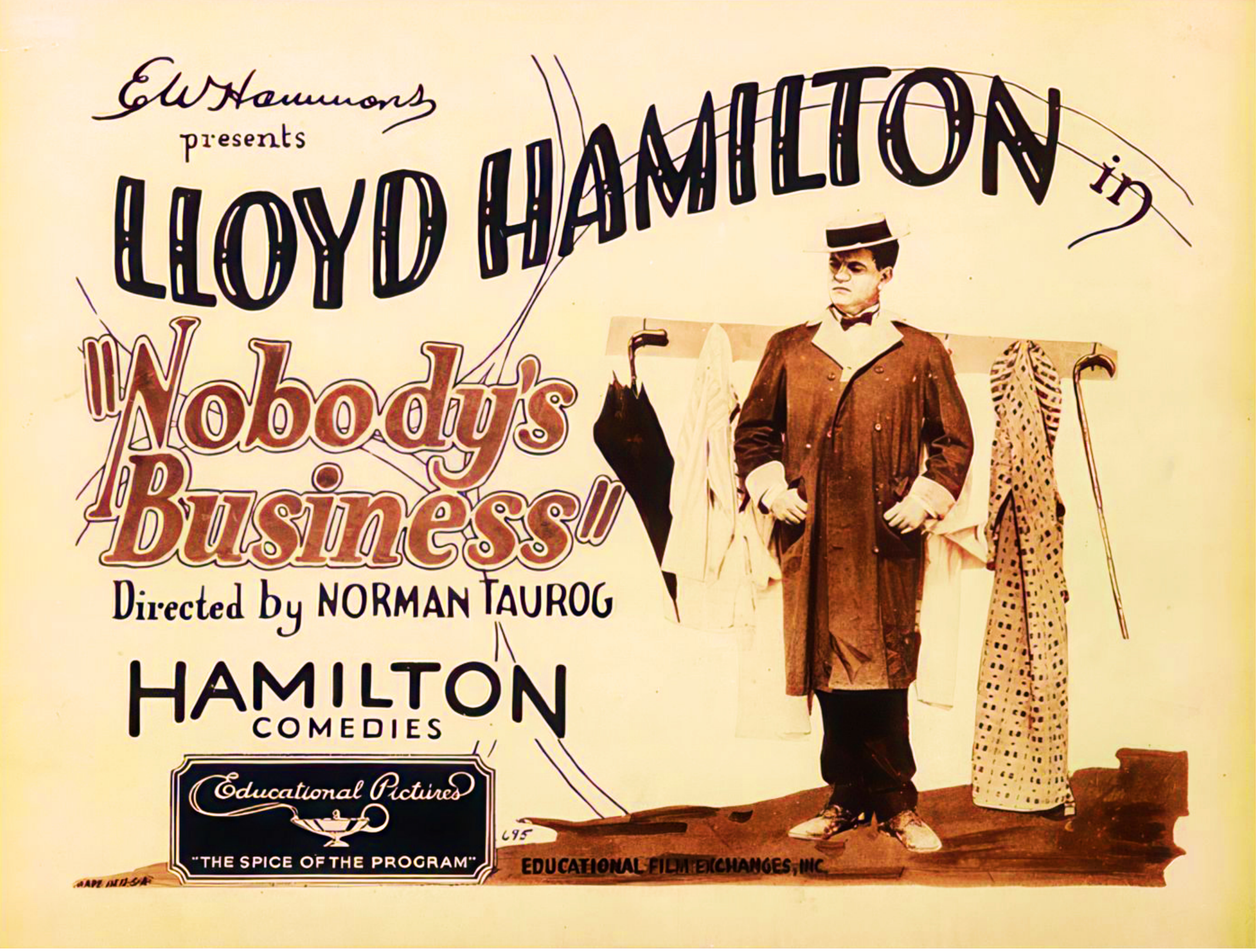
To call *Careful Please*'s plot a bit stream-of-conscious is to say the least, it's basically three gag-situations scotch-taped together by the slightest of plot-seams. Larry Semon could throw reel one's plot out the window in reel two, but this was certainly not Lloyd Hamilton's usual modus operandi. The first sequence with the scary Sutherland Family has promise, and would have worked fine into sort of an *Easy Street* premise that could easily cover two-reels, but it is completely jettisoned after the first two-thirds of the first reel and the Sutherlands are never seen again. The Sennett-like hanging car gag is technically well done, but it might as well be Larry Semon or Lige Conley performing it, it's a completely generic thrill sequence.

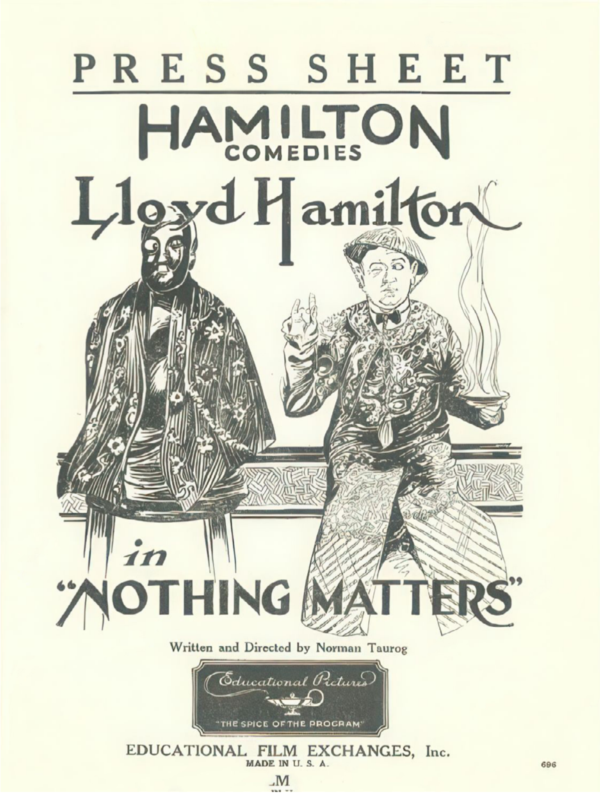
Nobody's Business (released April 4, 1926), the next Hamilton/Taurog match-up, actually begins with one of the most original and funny gags Lloyd Hamilton ever did, and it was later recreated in *The Comic* (1969) Carl Reiner's film about a fictional silent film comedian played by Dick Van Dyke. Hamilton begins the day trying to dress sartorially spiffy, but is thwarted by the treadbareness of his clothes, he puts on his coat, it rips up the back, after repairing it with safety pins, the lapels come off. One sleeve follows as he throws his lapels to the floor. Chasing moths out of his pockets, Lloyd loses his other sleeve when the dust makes him sneeze. The clothes brush removes the rest of the shreds.

Lloyd grabs a bathrobe off the horizontal coatrack on the wall to wear instead, but he doesn't realize the coatrack is still attached to the robe. Now wearing coatrack-sized epaulets on his shoulders, Hamilton walks down the street, knocking down passerbys as he passes. He loses the coatrack by the time he fights his way to the streetcar, where he has to stand while he tries to read a letter while Dick Sutherland, James T. Kelley, and Stanley Blystone all try to read it over his shoulder. There's a nice bit where all four react in unison as they read the same passages, but Ham reads too fast, so the others all take a page of the letter for themselves.

The treacherous tram-ride finally takes Hamilton to his seaside lunchwagon, as Sutherland, Kelley, Blystone and Eddie Boland all arrive for coffee and doughnuts. Sutherland finds that his doughnut deflates when he bites into it, and he gruffly demands corn flakes, but Hamilton is out of them. To assuage the adamant Mr. Sutherland, Ham shreds a straw hat through a meat grinder and pours milk on them, which Sutherland finds surprisingly digestable. Boland and Kelley dump their bootleg hootch into the coffee urn, and the coffee suddenly becomes very popular with the patronage. An impromptu rendition of "Sweet Adeline" carries on as another one of those sudden windstorms revs up, pushing the lunchwagon along the beach into a roller coaster, where it tosses the customers out one by one before plunging into the ocean.

As Lloyd fears he is going to go down with the wagon, a submarine emerged below the wagon, but then all the sailors want lunch. At least *Nobody's Business* sort-of progresses in a slightly more linear plot-thread than *Careful Please*, and the gags are good, but this is still Sennett-Semon territory with an elaborate but mechanical finish.

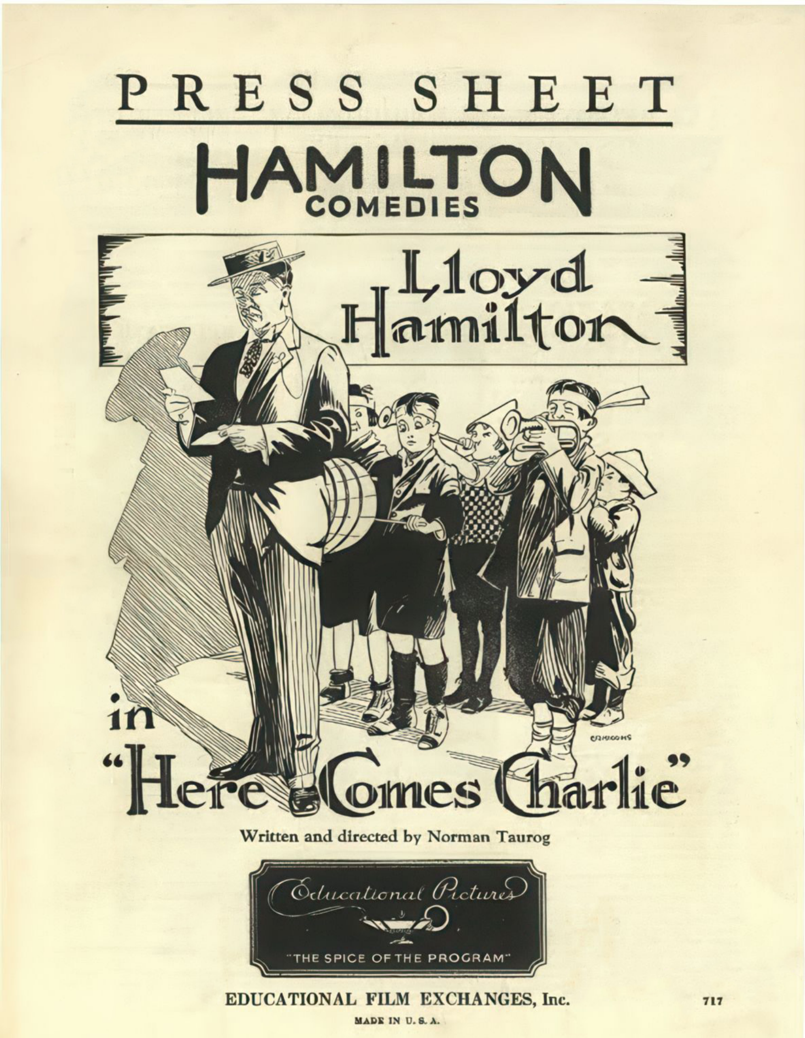



PRESS SHEET
HAMILTON COMEDIES
Lloyd Hamilton
in
"NOTHING MATTERS"
Written and Directed by Norman Taurog
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc.
MADE IN U. S. A.
696

Nothing Matters (released June 6, 1926) starts with a small-town private detective Lloyd taking on a couple of con men (Eddie Boland and Stanley Blystone) claiming to have an impenetrable safe-cracker-proof safe. After a nice opening gag sequence where Hamilton tries to shave in a small, unsteady mirror (sartorial comedy also seems to be a Lloyd Hamilton trademark) Ham is challenged by the conmen in the town square to break into the safe and he loads it with enough dynamite to vaporize the town and its citizens, which he manages to do while leaving the safe intact.

So much for reel one's plot, in reel two, Hamilton finds himself in the Big City on the conmen's trail, but ends up in Chinatown battling Chinaman Bob Kortman (number one on the Asian imitator's list) and slinky Siamese siren Anita Garvin, then working at Educational as a foil for comics like Hamilton and Lupino Lane. It's once again Larry Semon plotting, and gags any comic could have done. Exhibitors were beginning to comment that Lloyd Hamilton was not making their patrons laugh anymore. However, after all of these frankly average comedies, Hamilton and Taurog finally hit a bullseye.

TOP RIGHT: *Here Comes Charlie* (1926) L to R: Virginia Vance, Lloyd Hamilton, Robert Graves


PRESS SHEET
HAMILTON COMEDIES
Lloyd Hamilton
in
"Here Comes Charlie"
Written and directed by Norman Taurog
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc.
MADE IN U. S. A.
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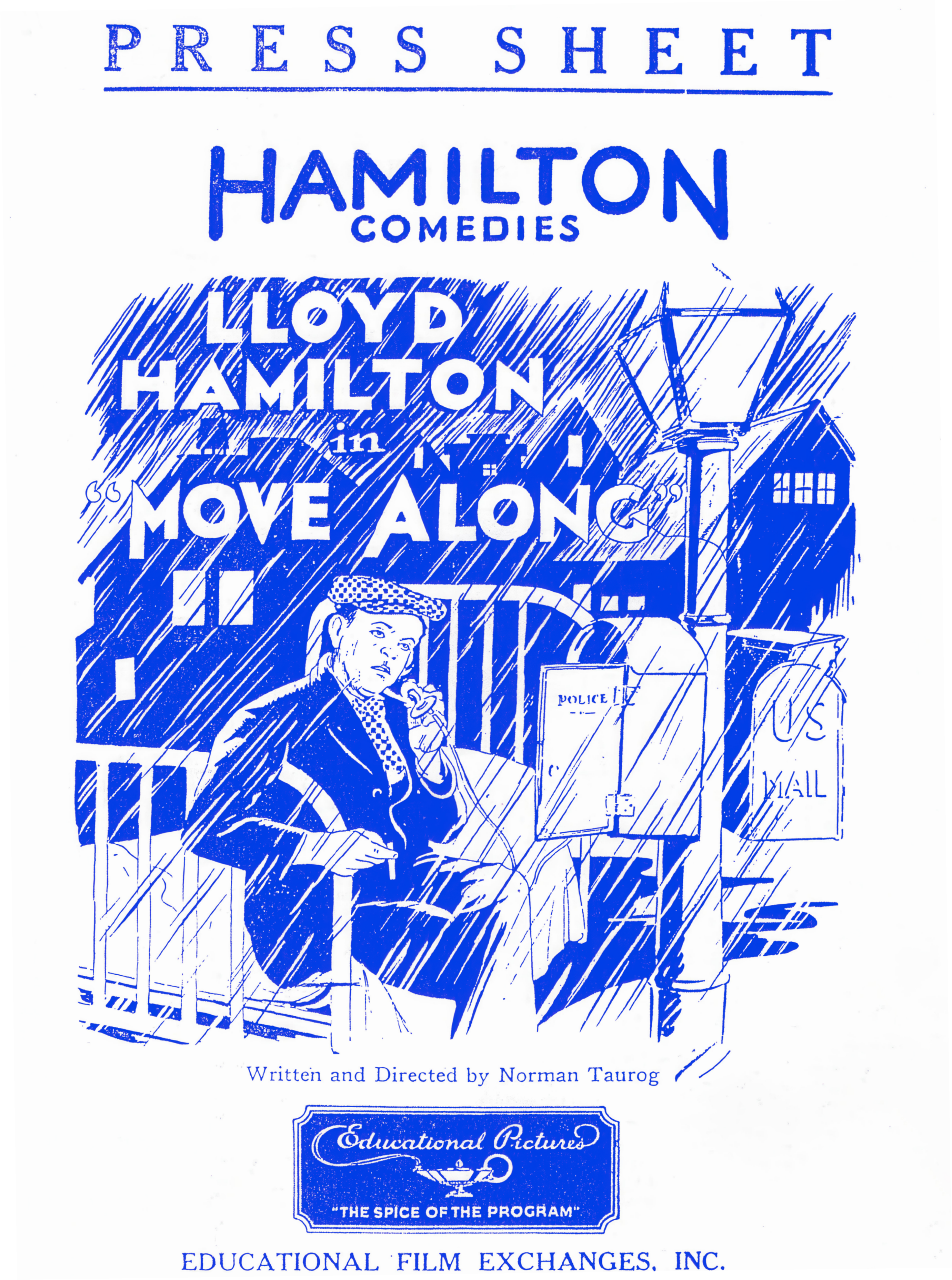


PRESS SHEET

HAMILTON
COMEDIES

LLOYD
HAMILTON
in
"MOVE ALONG"

Written and Directed by Norman Taurog

Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.

HAMILTON
MOVE ALONG

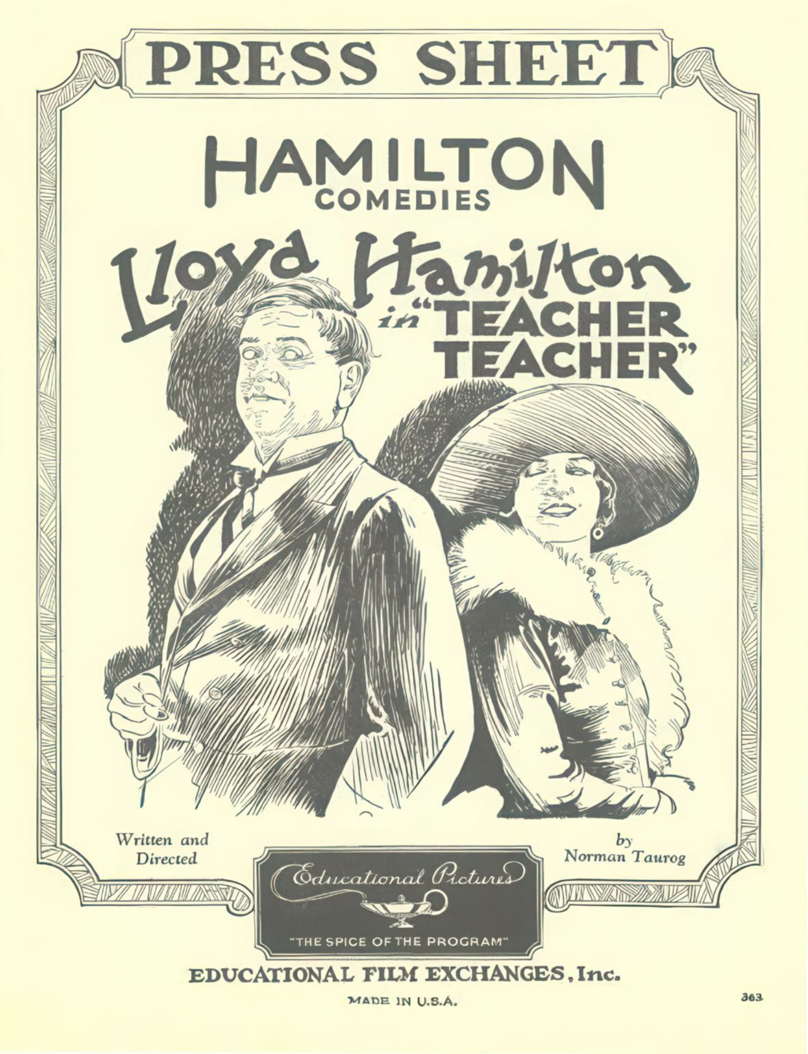
BELOW: *Move Along* (1926) Glenn Cavender as the policeman

Move Along may have been the finest comedy Hamilton ever made, certainly of what survives to be seen. A variation on *The Vagrant*, Lloyd is again broke, hungry and down on his luck, pursued by the cop telling him to "move along". He stops to watch a man eating in a restaurant window, not realizing that a steaming tray of food has accidentally been placed on his head by a passing delivery boy. He becomes the laughing stock of passers by as he strolls down the street, the tray perched precariously on his head. Just as he discovers it in a mirror, the delivery boy returns for it.

Looking for work, he comes upon an employment office hiring twelve people. Counting eleven in line, he quickly runs and joins it. A hungry, sad faced young woman comes up to him, and being ever the gentleman, Lloyd gives her his place in line.

Later, thrown out of the boarding house, furniture and all, he decides to live on the street. He turns the sidewalk in front of a warehouse into a cosy little apartment, missing nothing but the walls. His bed goes under the awning to protect him from the rain, the streetlight becomes his lamp, an old straw hat on a stick his ashtray.

The young girl he helped earlier reappears, apparently still hungry and homeless as well. It begins to snow, and they busily sweep the snow into walls, making themselves a sort of street side igloo. Though they have no food, they live here together happily, and finally fall in love, until Lloyd wakes from his dream, and the cop returns, and it is time again to move along. This wistful little two-reeler is a beautifully constructed comedy that only hints at melancholia that never interferes with humor.


PRESS SHEET
HAMILTON
COMEDIES
Lloyd Hamilton
in "TEACHER TEACHER"
Written and Directed
by Norman Taurog
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc.
MADE IN U.S.A.
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ABOVE: Lloyd Hamilton and Lupino Lane, Educational Pictures biggest comedy stars of the late 1920's.

LEFT: *Teacher Teacher* (1926) press sheet

There is one more interesting sounding Hamilton short from 1926, written and directed by Roscoe Arbuckle titled *One Sunday Morning* (released December 12, 1926). The film is not known to currently exist, but here is a plot description form the original Educational Pictures presskit for the film:

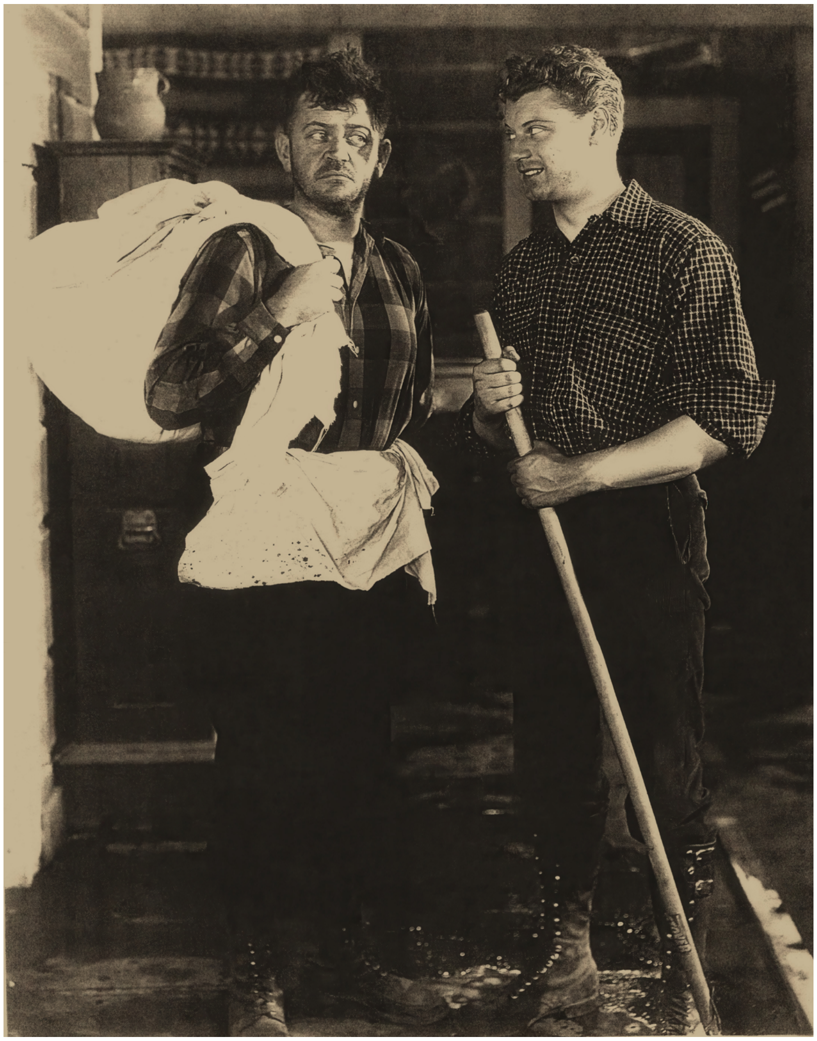
"Lloyd is seen as the head of a family, about to embark on a Sunday outing in the Family Flivver. The car never gets started. In fact, it never moves from the spot in which it is first seen---and Lloyd moves but very little away from it."

Sound familiar? Yes indeed, but until a print of *One Sunday Morning* turns up, it is all conjecture as to how closely Laurel and Hardy's *Perfect Day* borrows from its original inspiration.

The film was apparently Arbuckle's idea, as well as having Hamilton in normal dress (the critics commented on the lack of Hamilton's usual checkered cap and get-up of the time) and taking the concept of stretching a gag sequence to the entire two-reels in their attempts to get the car moving and off to a family picnic. Even if the film turns up, it is unlikely to take away from Stan and Babe's classic one iota, but it certainly worthy to note that the idea first appeared here in this Hamilton/Arbuckle collaboration. After one more short, *Peaceful Oscar* (released January 30, 1927), Roscoe Arbuckle would not work with Lloyd Hamilton again until late 1930, when Arbuckle would helm the last four Hamilton Educational talkies.

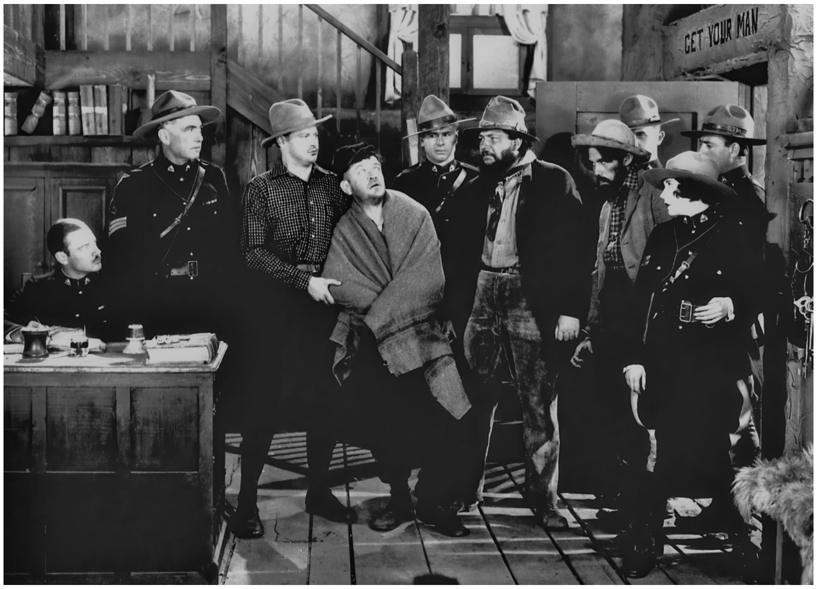
His disastrous personal life finally began to affect his work, and by 1927, the quality of his Educational comedies declined sharply. Films like *Somebody's Fault* (March 13th, 1927) and *Breezing Along* (May 1st, 1927), have a mechanical, Sennett-like feel to them with little inventiveness and Hamilton sleepwalking through his performances. In June he remarried, eloping with former Christie comedienne Irene Dalton. The marriage would last less than a year, now due to his precarious financial condition and his drinking.

He thought his luck had changed when MGM hired him in early 1927 to play the comic relief role of "Fuzzy" in their production of *Rose Marie* starring Renée Adorée, Ralph Forbes, and Harry Carey. But bad luck struck again and shooting was rife with problems, mostly involving Miss Adorée. After an expenditure of almost a quarter of a million dollars, MGM scrapped the film, completely recasting and reshooting it the following year. Hamilton had again failed to make the big time.



ABOVE: Lloyd Hamilton and Ralph Forbes in MGM's abandoned version of *Rose Marie* (1928)

BELOW: Lloyd Hamilton in another scene from the unfinished *Rose Marie* (1928) (Renée Adorée to far right).



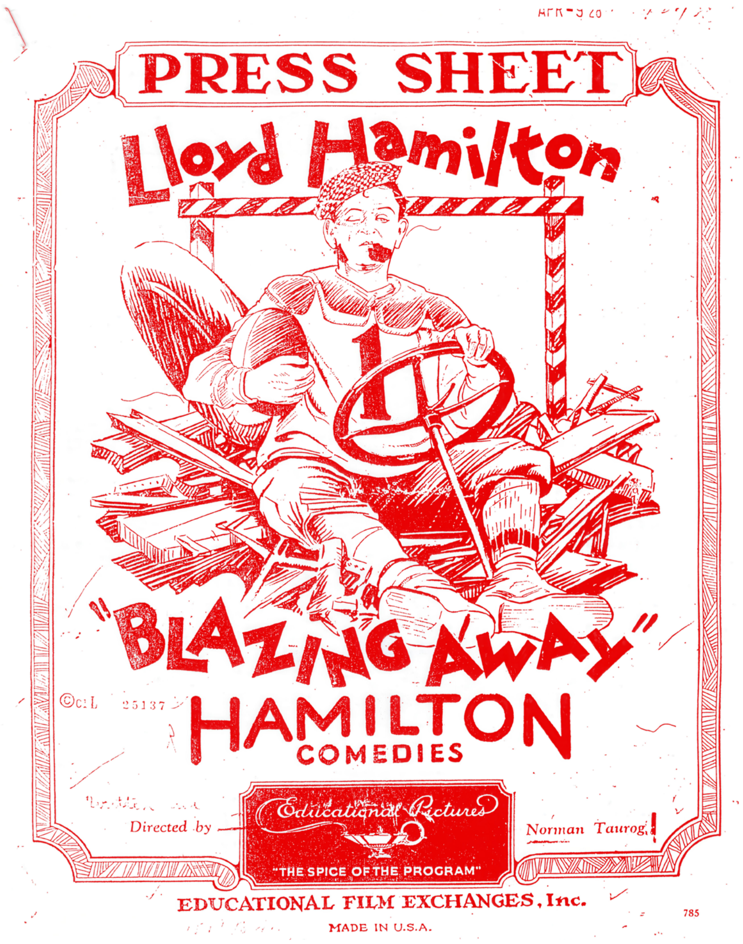
His career was built another serious blow when he was involved in a scandal of Arbuckle like proportions. On March 26th, 1927, Hamilton threw a party at the Crescent Club in Hollywood. During the part, a lightweight prize fighter named Eddie Diggins was fatally stabbed. Hamilton apparently discovered the dying man in a side room, and was held by police for questioning. Although he was not implicated in the murder, the resulting publicity, combined with his past problems, brought him to the attention of the Hays office, who banned him from the screen for one year. Educational immediately ground him through his next season of shorts before the ban took effect, and released the backlog of his shorts during the year of his banning, so Hamilton actually continued to appear on the nations screens through the Summer of 1928, even though he was not allowed to work during that entire year. The surviving films from that last silent season look hurried, short on inspiration, just gags and gag situations not particularly tailored to Hamilton's strengths, but cobbled together hurriedly to beat the ban deadline. Yet all the hurry proves that Lloyd Hamilton was still a popular enough commodity for Educational to make the effort, scandal or no scandal. Looking at Hamilton's filmography, the gap between silent releases and sound releases is but a few months, looking like there was little or no ban to really speak of, even though the truth was that Lloyd Hamilton spent a solitary and non-sober year off the screen.

Several of those 1927-28 seasons ground out like sausages shorts do survive. *Papa's Boy* (released December 18, 1927) has Lloyd as a prissy butterfly collector whose father (Robert Graves, whose subtitle describes as "once tried to swat a fly on a custard pie by throwing the pie at his wife") hires chauffeur Glen Cavender to "make a man" out of Ham.

But Lloyd chases a butterfly out of the house and onto the sidewalk, where he mistakes a butterfly tattoo on Blanche Payson's leg for the genuine item. Ham tries to catch it with his net — big mistake. He then tries a pair of elongating pinchers to snatch it off Blanche's calf, he pinches her butt by accident — Big Mistake! He finally knocks Blanche down, which she actually takes surprisingly well, she show him that it's a tattoo, then wraps an umbrella around his neck.

The butterfly chase continues, this time on an older woman's hat. Her son (Jack "Tiny" Lipson) catches Ham and tosses him into a trash can.

The butterfly chase continues: one lands on a car tire, and Ham pulls out a pin to stick it, of course puncturing Al Thompson's tire. As Al chastizes him, Lloyd manages to puncture the three other tires.

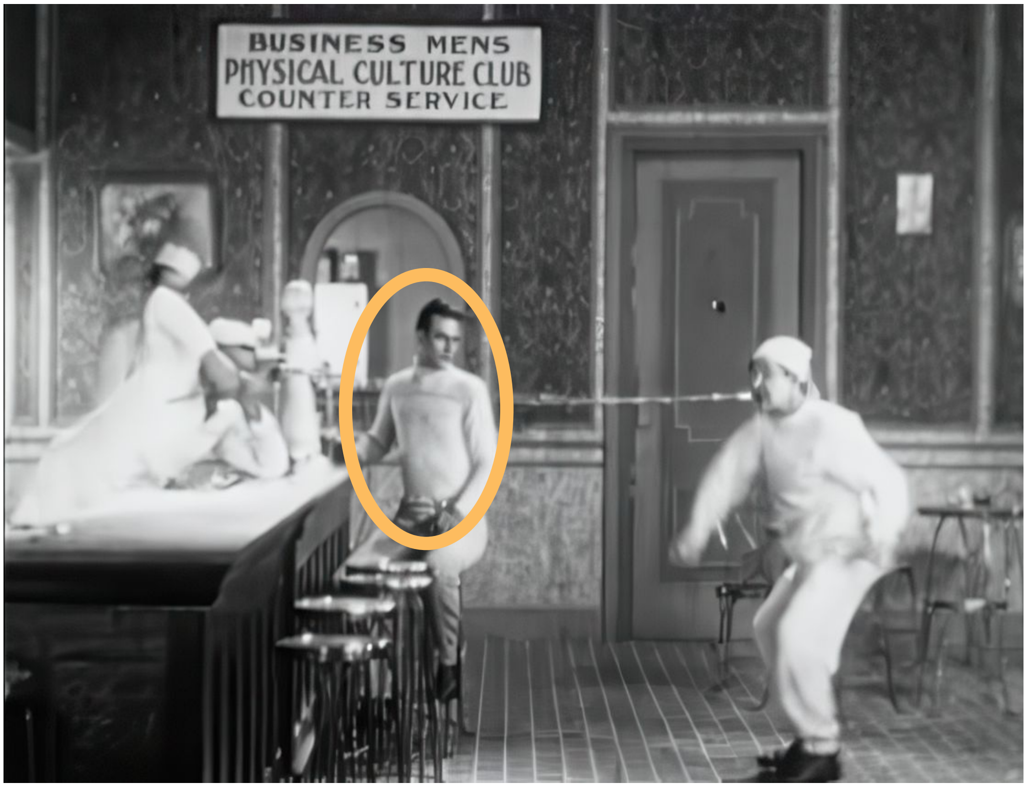


End Reel One, new plot begins with Reel Two as Cavender takes Hamilton to the woods to camp by a creek. Off to collect firewood, one of the big logs Ham brings back is actually an alligator, which bites Glen's butt. The butterfly chase continues, Ham gets stuck in a hollow log, Glen chops the log apart. Ham then lays down on a log, which is, of course, the alligator, it goes in the creek, Ham doesn't notice.

Later on, while sleeping outside, a skunk crawls under Hamilton's blanket, then, to keep up with his comedy signature, ends up in his clothes. Lloyd removes it, throws on Cavender's head. The smell is so bad, Ham puts a clothespin on a dog's nose. Brilliant groundbreaking comedy.

Blazing Away (released April 22, 1928) feels more like a Hal Roach Taxi Boys comedy than a Lloyd Hamilton as Lloyd and Kewpie Morgan as rival taxi drivers fighting over leading lady Lucille Hutton.

As a foil, Morgan proves he's good at getting muck thrown in his face when Lloyd fills an innertube full of motor oil and has Kewpie prove his manhood by inflating the tube using his own lungpower, it explodes and smears him. Later, during the football game between the rival taxi companies, Hamilton substitutes an ostrich egg for the football and scores a messy bullseye right in Morgan's kisser. Standard football gags abound, but the wrap-up is a nice topper in the form of the entirety of both teams tackling a taxicab and crushing it like a Dixie Cup. A well-executed mechanical gag, but where is Hamilton in all this? It is really like Lloyd Hamilton has given up and is just marking time until his next bender, which is likely the case.



A Home Made Man (1928) A young John Wayne seated at the soda fountain watches the proceedings.

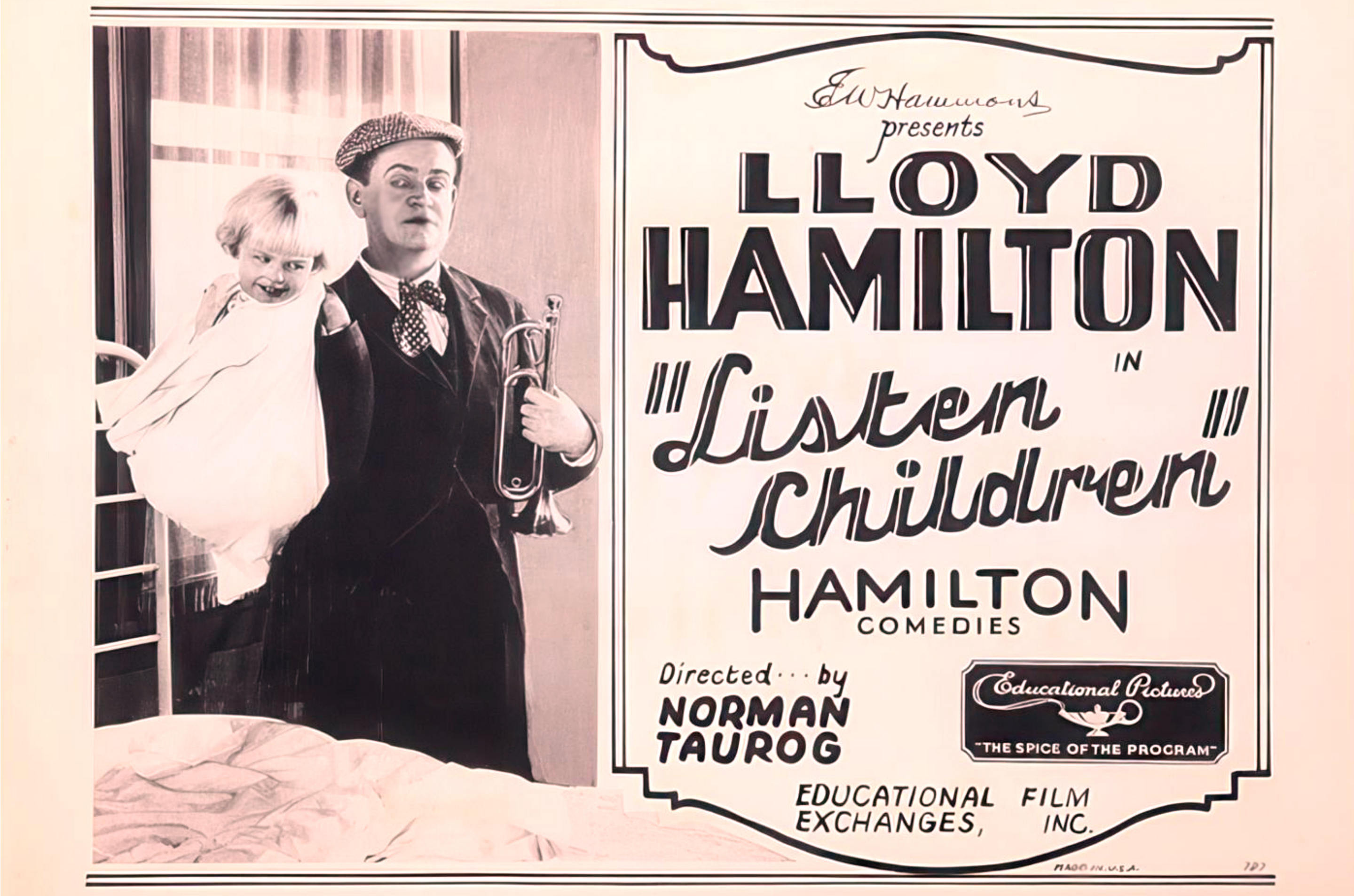
Scraping the bottom of the comedy barrel——*A Home-Made Man* (released July 17, 1928) is set in a "physical culture club" where boss Kewpie Morgan fires-beats up soda jerk (yes, there's apparently a soda fountain in a physical culture club) Bobby Barber and puts s sign out to hire another. Lloyd's mother comes in and asks Kewpie if her son can have the job. Kewpie agrees, and she leaves, never to return. Enter Hamilton, who goes right to work while catching the eye of lovely waitress Lucille Hutton.

So now Lloyd goes through the standard slapstick catalog of waiter/soda jerk gags: he picks up a tall stack of dinner plates and gyrates around with them dangerously wobbling as he exclaims "I've never dropped a plate in my life!", miraculously setting them down happily on top of his apron, which pulls them all smashing to the floor as he walks away. Then somebody orders a malted, and Lloyd does his own version of Buster Keaton's soda jerk routine from *College* (1927) differing in that it gets no laughs at all, Lloyd accidentally hits customers with scoops of ice cream, and puts the shaker on a laughing fat man's stomach to mix it up.

More food gags follow: the cook throws pancakes that break plates, then a bowl of soup that hits Ham on the neck. Al Thompson orders coffee and doughnuts, and the doughnut soaks up the whole cup of coffee when he dunks it, squirting Ham in the face when Al bited into it. Then a man orders a butterscotch sundae, and Lloyd lades on the thick butterscotch with a large spoon. "May I lick the spoon?", the man asks, and Hamilton holds it out, but guy gets stuck in the butterscotch, stretching the unbreaking syrup farther and farther across the room repeating a gag Hamilton had done the eyar before in *Breezing Along* (1927) with a stretching salami. The only interesting thing about this scene is a very young John Wayne sitting at the fountain watching this in one of his early extra roles (Wayne was doing bit work at Educational in 1927-28).

Feeding Kewpie Morgan an exploding stuffed tomato makes Morgan move Hamilton to the Gymnasium, where he makes a row of working out men do calisthenics with Indian clubs until all extend their arms and knock each other out. Then Ham abuses guys lifting weights, knocking the weights into the air and onto the now-unconscious men. Then Ham swings on ropes with another guy until they propel themselves out the window for a quick high and dizzy bit. Then Kewpie Morgan gets angry again and challenges Ham to a boxing match and they end p beating all the men watching them. Then Norman Taurog realizes they have filled up two reels and wraps with the hanging light globes falling on Kewpie Morgan's head and knocking him out. One more in the can.

A Home Made Man (1928) Lloyd Hamilton and Kewpie Morgan.


E.W. Hammons
presents
LLOYD
HAMILTON
IN
"Listen Children"
HAMILTON
COMEDIES
Directed · · · by
NORMAN
TAUROG
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
EDUCATIONAL FILM
EXCHANGES, INC.
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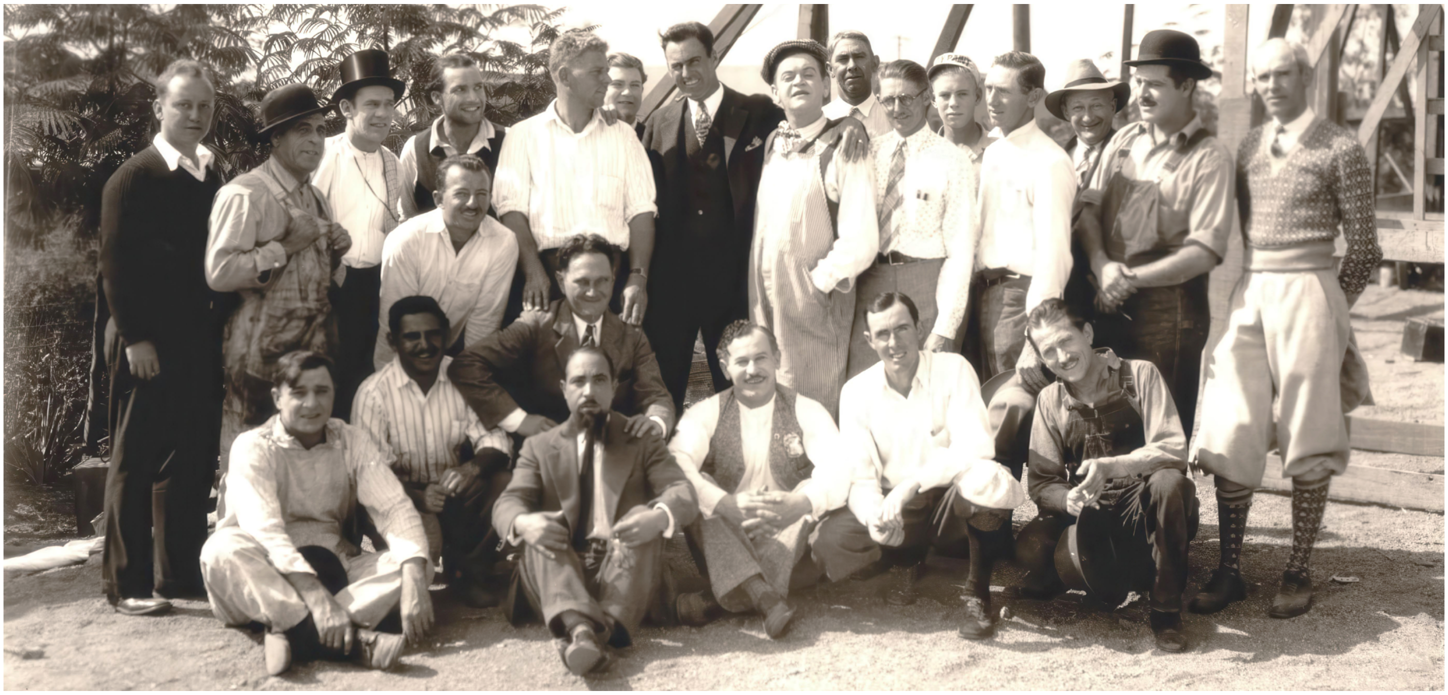
Listen Children (1928) the last Lloyd Hamilton silent Educational two-reeler.



Between Jobs (1928) Cast and crew photo, including Al Thompson (top hat left), Stanley Blystone (derby right), Bobby Barber (on ground with goatee), Glen Cavender (on ground, grey vest). Conspicuously absent is credited director Norman Taurog.

Black Waters (1929) Lloyd Hamilton's talking debut was this Herbert Wilcox produced/Marshall Neilan directed British feature shot in Hollywood.

He spent 1928 in a drunken stupor. Hamilton lost his home in Laurel Canyon, was being sued for back alimony by his two ex-wives, and was forced to cadge money from old friends like Henry Lehrman to support his two quart a day drinking habit. He contemplated suicide, giving up hope of salvaging anything of his damaged career.

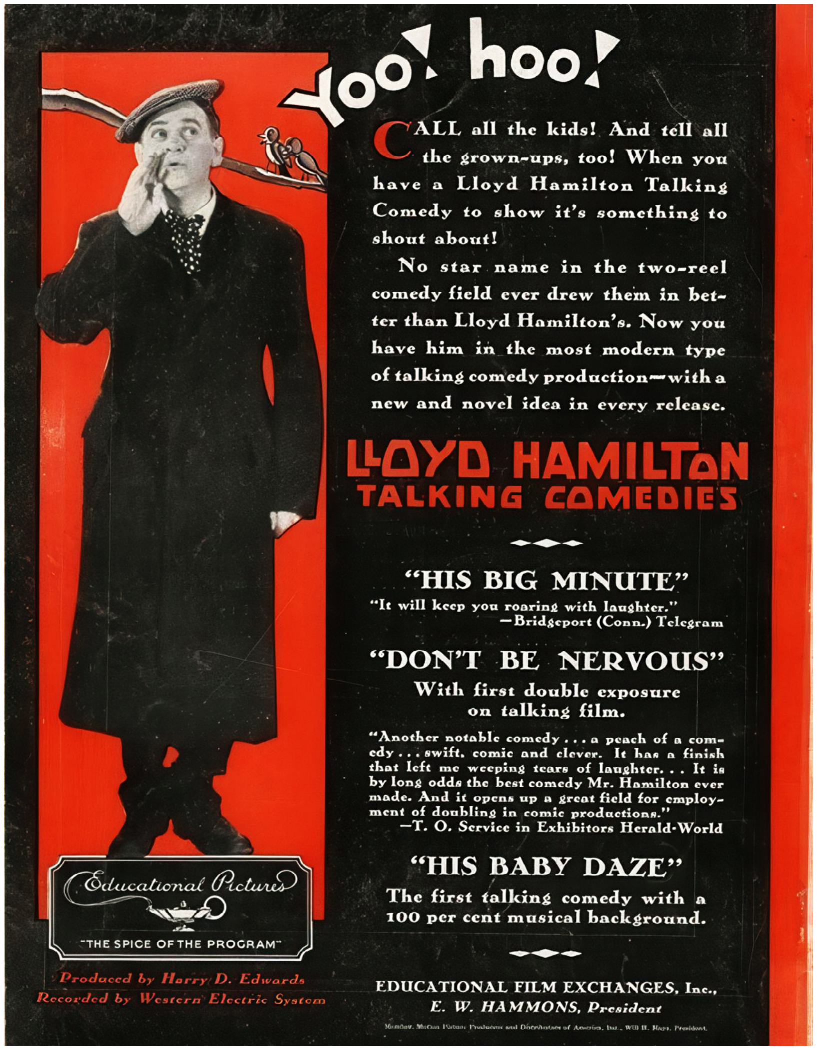
His friends came to the rescue, as they seemed to do for the rest of his life. When the ban expired, Marshall Neilan cast Hamilton in the early talkie feature *Black Waters*, made for the British producer Herbert Wilcox. Neilan was nearing the end of his phenomenally successful 1920's career as a director, mostly due to his own drinking problem. Hamilton had an excellent featured role in the all-star murder mystery set on an ocean liner. He plays a stuttering English butler, forced to whistle before he gets his words out. Released by World Wide Pictures, *Black Waters* garnered good reviews and proved Hamilton capable of working in talking pictures.

With the help of Mrs. Wallace Reid, Hamilton managed to curtail his drinking. Educational Pictures renewed his contract and announced a new series of Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedies. The first: *His Big Minute*, was released May 5th, 1929 and went over well with audiences glad to have their old favorite back. Hamilton's affected upper-class accent and whiny moan fit perfectly with his "shabby genteel" demeanor. Educational spent good money on the new series, giving the comedies elaborate sets and a technical proficiency far above the other two-reeler talkies of the time. Harry Edwards directed.

The second release *Don't Be Nervous* (July 7th, 1929) is even better than the first. Hamilton plays a dual role; his regular character, and notorious gangster Nick The Sheik, who's recently escaped from prison. Of course they are mistaken for each otters, and Lloyd is taken to Nick's hideout, accepted by Nick's gang, seduced by Nick's girlfriend, and nearly assassinated by Nick's rival. The scenes where the two Hamiltons appear are neatly done, especially for an early talky, and it is interesting to watch Hamilton play a tough guy.

Hamilton's third talkie short, *His Baby Daze* (released August 18, 1929) utilized several interesting luxuries for an early talkie two-reeler, including a complete musical score running through the short (and Marion Stadler from Universal's *King Of Jazz* singing behind the opening titles). It's a pretty good comedy, with Hamilton playing butler to millionaire Eddie Barry who has decided to adopt a son and has run a newspaper ad auditioning eligible lads. Crooked circus midget Little Billy dresses up as a six year old and gets the "job" while he and his cohorts plan to rob the mansion. Lloyd becomes suspicious of the "young" man and has to cope with the gorilla from the circus that Little Billy has brought to the house to help the robbery.

So the question begs: is Lloyd Hamilton any good in talkies?



CALL all the kids! And tell all the grown-ups, too! When you have a Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedy to show it's something to shout about!

No star name in the two-reel comedy field ever drew them in better than Lloyd Hamilton's. Now you have him in the most modern type of talking comedy production—with a new and novel idea in every release.

LLOYD HAMILTON
TALKING COMEDIES

◆

"HIS BIG MINUTE"

"It will keep you roaring with laughter."
—Bridgeport (Conn.) Telegram

"DON'T BE NERVOUS"

With first double exposure on talking film.

"Another notable comedy . . . a peach of a comedy . . . swift, comic and clever. It has a finish that left me weeping tears of laughter. . . It is by long odds the best comedy Mr. Hamilton ever made. And it opens up a great field for employment of doubling in comic productions."
—T. O. Service in Exhibitors Herald-World

"HIS BABY DAZE"

The first talking comedy with a 100 per cent musical background.

◆

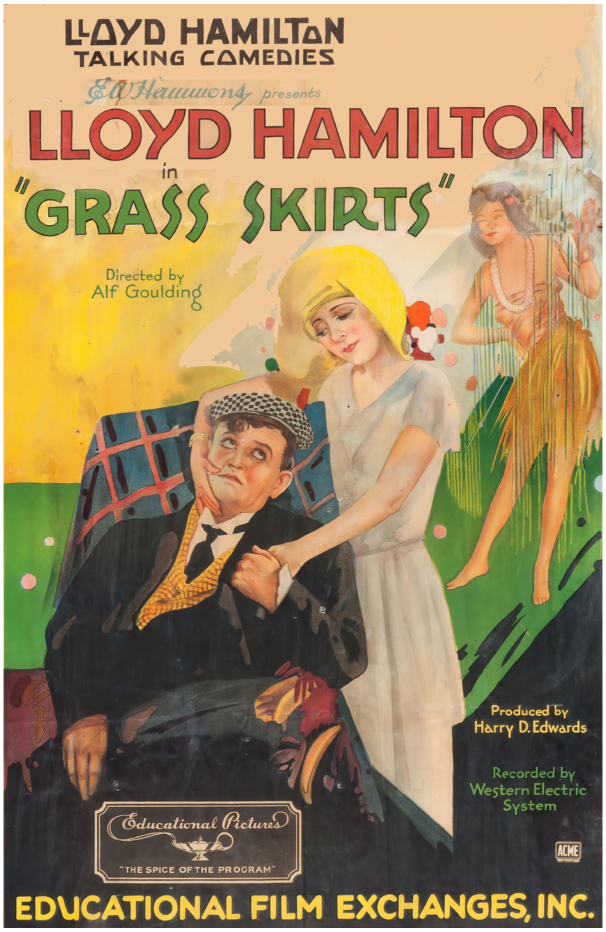
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

Produced by Harry D. Edwards
Recorded by Western Electric System

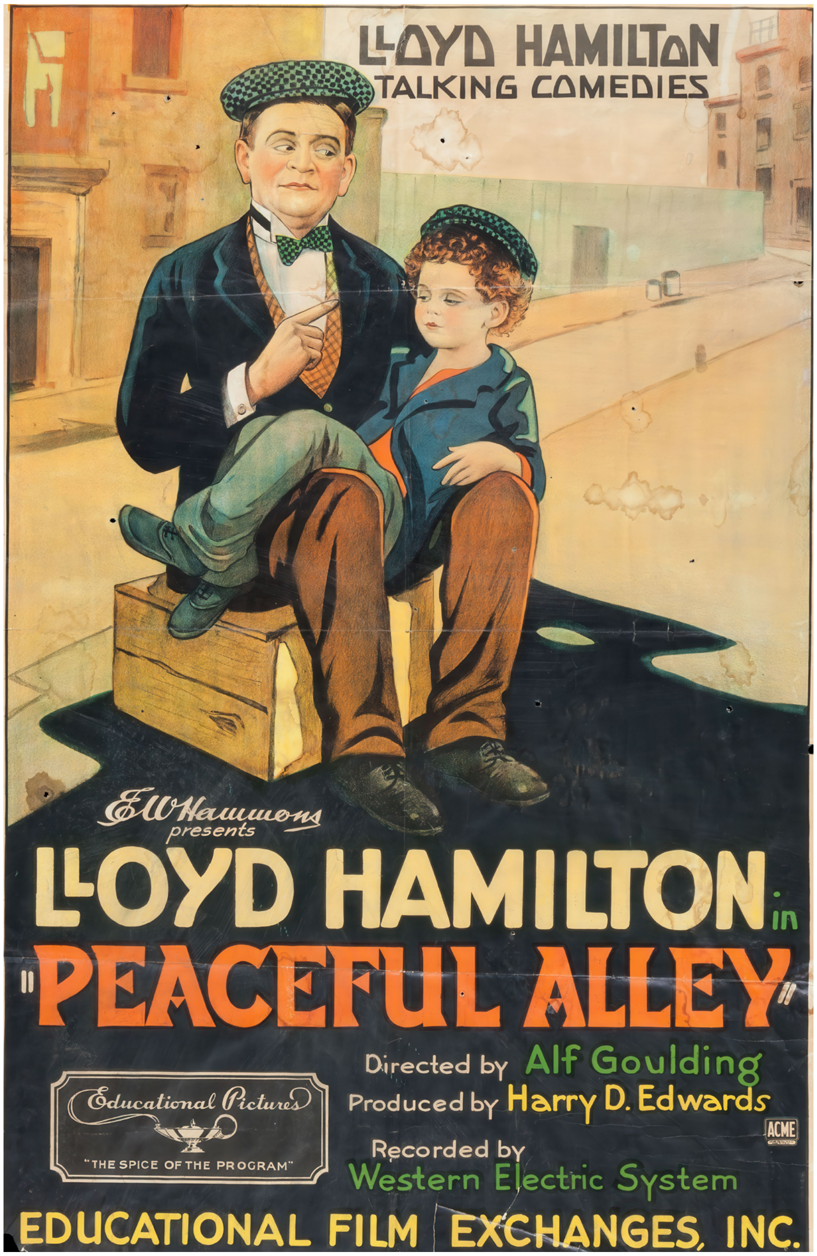
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, Inc.,
E. W. HAMMONS, President

Educational Pictures heralds Lloyd Hamilton's return in talkie two-reelers.

The answer is yes, his voice is perfect for his character, and he has an odd, off-kilter timing to his delivery, he will often spout strange non-sequiturs much in the same way Harry Langdon does, though it is a much more deliberately-paced speech than the prattle Langdon frequently delivers in talkies. It also appears that Hamilton is way more engaged in his early talkies, he's happy to be back working again, and he exhibits more sobriety and effort than he does in his late silents. The Hamilton talkie two-reelers are elaborate affairs, the money shows on the screen, and the Exhibitor reviews are very positive, it's as good a comeback for Hamilton as one could expect.


LLOYD HAMILTON
TALKING COMEDIES
E.W. Hammons presents
LLOYD HAMILTON
in
"GRASS SKIRTS"
Directed by
Alf Goulding
Produced by
Harry D. Edwards
Recorded by
Western Electric
System
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
ACME
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.

UPPER RIGHT: *Peaceful Alley* (1929)
Lloyd Hamilton and Douglas Scott


LLOYD HAMILTON
TALKING COMEDIES
E.W. Hammons
presents
LLOYD HAMILTON in
"PEACEFUL ALLEY"
Directed by Alf Goulding
Produced by Harry D. Edwards
Recorded by
Western Electric System
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"
ACME
EDUCATIONAL FILM EXCHANGES, INC.

Camera Shy (1930) Harry Woods holds Ham in drag during the Civil War story.

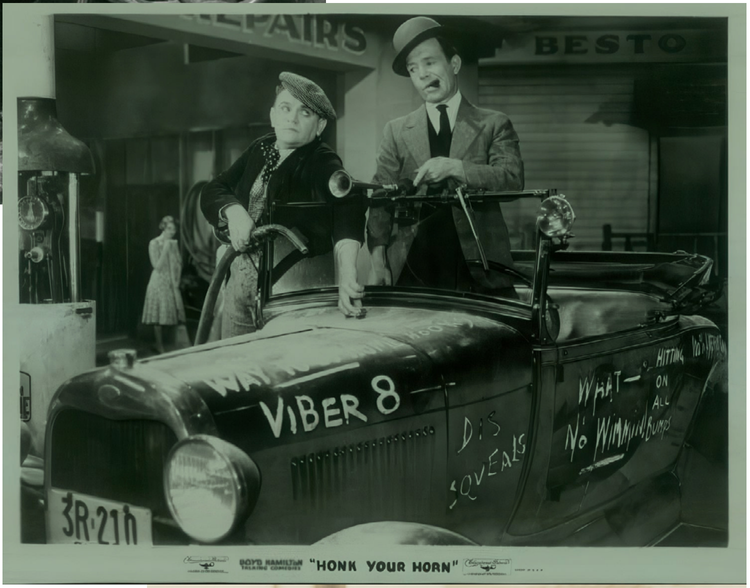
Camera Shy (released February 9, 1930) is a tale of the Old South that is seen in flashbacks but is obviously a different film (one bit of evidence is the different leading ladies seen in the flashbacks and the framing device) in the different parts of the film. Natalie Joyce is in the backlot footage where Hamilton tries to sell his story to Director Will Hays, Ruth Hiatt is the Southern Belle. The Old South footage gets more and more convoluted as the tale is told, and in the end, Hamilton is chased away from the shoot. It's not the best Lloyd Hamilton talkie, but it is a clever save on a comedy that probably didn't work on its own, reusing the old trick first used in the Hal Roach All-Star comedy *Don Key, Son Of Burro* (1925) and later spoofed in W. C. Fields *Never Give A Sucker An Even Break* (1941).

Camera Shy (1930) Lloyd annoys director Will T. Hayes and movie vamp Natalie Joyce.

Good Morning Sheriff (released May 25, 1930) has tenderfoot ham wandering into a wild western village looking for a new sheriff to capture Black Bart (Eddie Baker), the town terrorizer. Swearing in Lloyd as the new candidate to keep the peace, nobody thinks the milk-drinking law officer (there's one real-acting scene where Hamilton refuses a glass of whiskey from Bart) has any chance of not getting quickly killed, but Lloyd manages to trap the baddie alone in his hideout, driving a Model T around and around the shack as Bart wastes his ammunition reducing the car into a circling chassis. Ham then knocks off the chimney causing Bart's fireplace to fill the hideout with smoke, allowing Ham to return to town with a captured Bart to all concern's amazement.

Polished Ivory (1930) the merry moving men: Lloyd Hamilton and Tom Kennedy.

BEAR CAT
TRANSFER


REPAIRS
BESTO
VIBER 8
DIS SQUEALS
WHAT— No WIMMIN!
HITTING ON ALL BUMPS
3R-21
LLOYD HAMILTON TALKING COMEDIES "HONK YOUR HORN"

Honk Your Horn (released June 29, 1930) is a playful little comedy that has Ham trying to help raise business for fledgling Garage-owner Lige Conley in one of his few sound roles (Conley was writing gags for the Hamilton talkies at the time and can also be seen in *Good Morning Sheriff*) by causing auto accidents and directing the victims to Conley's Garage. There's a nice silent-comedy feel to some of the created car-wreck sight gags, especially a runaway flivver knocking down a row of telephone poles like dominoes.

More feature appearances came his way. Marshall Neilan put Hamilton in his next feature *Tanned Legs*, made by RKO. He then appeared in two excellent skits in Warner Brother's all-star review *The Show Of Shows*. The first was a comic dance with fellow comedians Lupino Lane, Ben Turpin, Heinie Conklin and Lee Moran. The second was a comic poetry recital with Frank Fay, Louise Fazenda and Beatrice Lillie. Hamilton and Lillie hit it off so well that he was cast to appear with her in the Fox feature *Are You There?* (November 30th, 1930).

Lillie may have or may not have done Hamilton any favors getting him cast in this strange mish-mosh of a movie. The Canadian-born lady Peel was already a West-End and Broadway legend, but the movies were never quite sure how to deal with her low-key but bizarre sense of humor. MGM had put her in one silent, *Exit Smiling* (1926) in which she acquitted herself quite well, but it's reception did not inspire the studio to do a follow-up. Lillie had not been happy with Warner Brothers and *The Show Of Shows* when the studio cut her solo number and released it as a separate Vitaphone short, sending Lillie and the Warners into court, a lawsuit she lost.

Fox took the comedienne on for this 1930 musical just around the time when musicals were becoming box-office poison. Directed in his usual flat style by Hamilton McFadden, *Are You There?* tried hard for a Marx-Brotherish surrealism, but the production staff and Director were simply not up to the task, having no idea how to sustain the far more calculated interior logic that this sort of comedy actually requires, making the film jump all over the place in terms of tone, and after some confused audience responses in previews, Fox cut four musical numbers from it and dumped a sixty-minute straight comedy version out to American Theaters with nearly no fanfare at all.

Are You There (1930) Lloyd Hamilton and Jillian Bond are menaced by Gustav Von Seyffertitz and Richard Alexander.

Are You There (1930)

ABOVE: Director Hamilton McFadden and Lloyd Hamilton.

LEFT: Hamilton and Beatrice Lille

Lloyd Hamilton plays a "Hostler" (a person who looks after horses) to Lillie's super-detective Shirley Travis masquerading as Lady Diana Drummond, a famous big-game huntress to stop adventuress Olga Baclanova from marrying the Duke of St. Pancras (George Grossmith) for his money. Lillie and Hamilton have one good scene together where he tries to teach her how to ride horses from a ten-letter correspondence course, but Lloyd's part and the reason for his inclusion in the film make no more sense than anything else left in the final cut. He appears from time to time during the rest of the film, trying to control out of control dogs during a fox hunt, doing what he can to get laughs in a completely superfluous part. *Are You There?* died a quick death in the states, and did little better in England and Canada where Beatrice Lillie's name minted more coin, she didn't make another film for seven years and Lloyd Hamilton made no more feature films.

DOG BISCUITS

Prize Puppies (1930)

TOP: Ham is once again mistaken for an expert, here Harry Fenwick thinks he's a dog-show judge.

MIDDLE: Will T. Hayes and Harry Fenwick push Ham to rig the contest.

BOTTOM: now gangsters put the bite on Ham to award their dog.

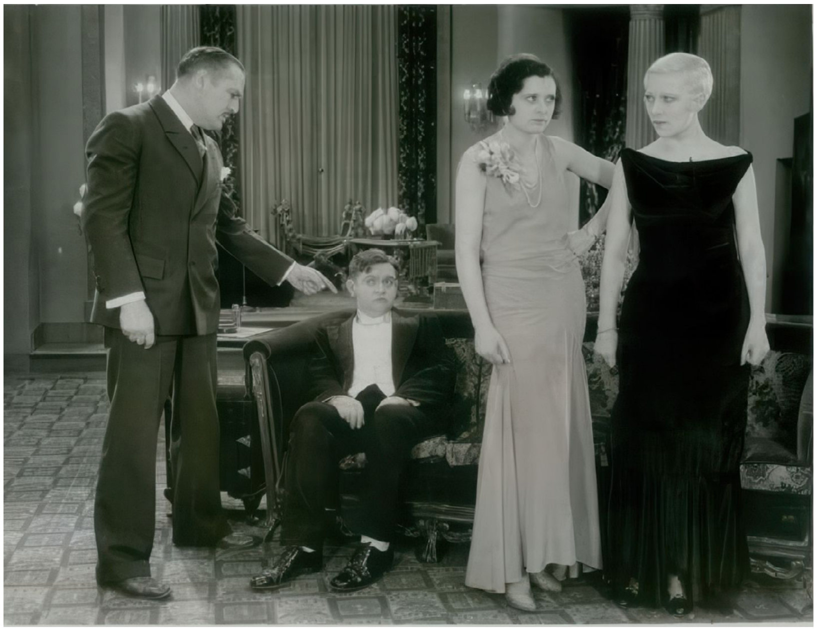
In 1930, the Educational Comedies continued apace, with Harry Edwards now sharing directing duties with Alf Goulding and Roscoe Arbuckle. *Follow The Swallow* (April 27th, 1930) has Lloyd taking his family out to an amusement park. He wins the lucky number ticket on an auto raffle but junior (played by a very young Billy Barty) swallows it. He is mistaken for a dog show judge in *Prize Puppies* (August 3rd, 1930), and is threatened by every owner to give their police dog first prize. He awards the prize to a cure blonde, casing a riot, and he escapes into a Turkish bath. He emerges with all his clothes shrunk. After years of walking like he has tight underwear, he really has tight underwear!

Follow the Swallow (1930)

TOP LEFT: Ruth Hiatt returns to work with Lloyd Hamilton.

BELOW: Battling Ham.

BOTTOM: Lloyd holds Billy Barty as he punches Joe Young.



TOP: *Ex-Plumber* (1931) another Roscoe Arbuckle-directed comedy with Lloyd Hamilton, Addie McPhail and Mitchell Lewis.

CENTER: *Ex-Plumber* (1931) L to R: Stanley Blystone, Lloyd Hamilton, Addie McPhail, Amber Norman.

Just as Hamilton's comeback seemed complete, his proverbial bad luck struck again. Due to the depression, and a shrinking market for short subjects, Educational was forced to cancel Hamilton's rather costly comedies at the end of his second series.

Still fending off ex-wives and now the Internal Revenue Service, Hamilton was forced to declare bankruptcy in June 1931. He was fortunate to find work at Universal, in a new starring series, and managed to make five more two-reelers before disaster struck again. These Universal Red Star Comedies from 1931-32 are very rare commodities to see indeed (even rarer than Universal's silent comedy shorts, and they're pretty damn rare as well!). *Hello Napoleon* (released June 3, 1931) has turned up and is a mixed bag of good and bad material. Directed by Harry J. Edwards (that's the one who directed Harry Langdon, not the Harry D. Edwards who produced Hamilton's Educational talkies), the short starts with Lloyd and a young girl (played by a very young Anne Shirley) throwing firecrackers around. Lloyd is a gardener working for homeowner Al Thompson, and he is waging war with a crowd of rabbits and gophers in a wonderful comic sequence as various critters run in and out of ground holes as Lloyd tries to attack them above ground. Finally, Hamilton places a large firecracker in a hole, but manages to be too close and blows up his own nose instead.

With his proboscis bandaged to Pinocchio proportions, Ham goes to the hospital, where Dr. Billy Franey manages to slam it in a door. The hospital also apparently houses mental patients, including Billy Engle and Jerry Mandy, who convince Lloyd that they are also doctors. As the bogus medical men administer more and more bizarre treatment, the short begins to droop, which is a pity because the first half is delightful. Harry J. Edwards was a good director for Hamilton, and one hope more of these Red Star Comedies resurface.

"HAM"

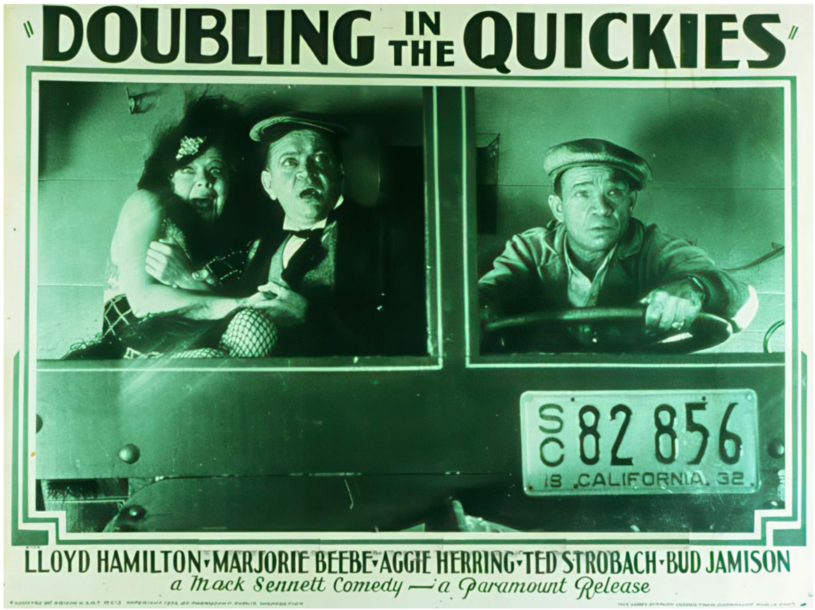
Hamilton had never completely controlled his drinking, and his health began to decay. Then in September, 1931, he was hit by an automobile in a pedestrian accident that fractured his left leg again and placed him in the hospital with internal injuries. Universal was forced to cancel his series with the release of *Robinson Crusoe And Son* (February 24th, 1932), a sound remake of his silent *Robinson Crusoe Ltd.*

False Impressions (1932) Lloyd Hamilton finally works for Mack Sennett.

Hamilton was off the screen for more than a year. A few days after he left the hospital in mid-November, 1931, he broke his right leg after visiting his friend, actor Rex Lease. He failed to heed doctor's warning about his alcoholism, and he developed cirrhosis of the liver. Desperate for money, he found work in Mack Sennett's Paramount Comedies once his health had established.

The four comedies Hamilton made for Sennett; *False Impressions* (November 4th, 1932) *Doubling In The Quickies* (December 16th, 1932), *The Lion And The House* (December 23rd, 1932) and *Too Many Highballs* (February 10th, 1933) are probably the most accessible titles in his filmography, due to their availability in Television distribution. Unfortunately, they are also some of his worst work. Sennett tried to team him with comedienne Marjorie Beebe, but there is absolutely no chemistry between them. Only the final short, *Too Many Highballs*, is really worth viewing. *Highballs* is co-written (with an uncredited W. C. Fields, for whom the short was originally intended, but Sennett

Doubling in the Quickies (1932) a lively, if not particularly good late Lloyd Hamilton comedy with Marjorie Beebe and Joe Bordeaux.


"DOUBLING IN THE QUICKIES"
SC 82 856
18 CALIFORNIA 32
LLOYD HAMILTON • MARJORIE BEEBE • AGGIE HERRING • TED STROBACH • BUD JAMISON
a Mack Sennett Comedy — a Paramount Release

TOP: *False Impressions* (1932) Lloyd Hamilton and Marjorie Beebe.

BOTTOM: one last good two-reeler — *Too Many Highballs* (1933)

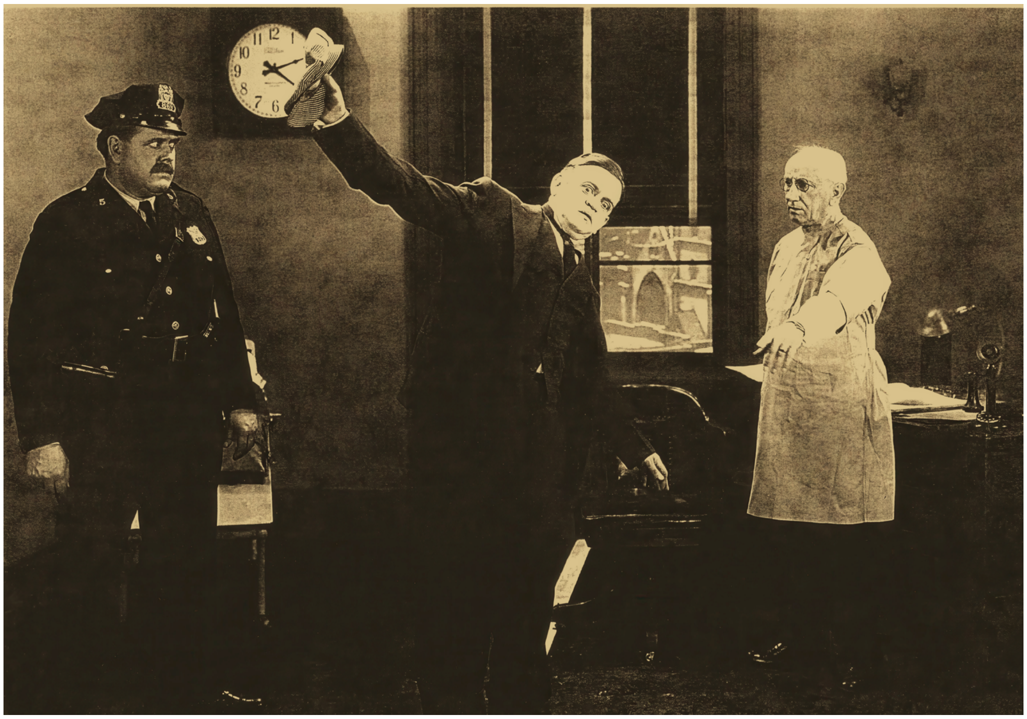
replaced him with Hamilton after a creative dispute over *The Fatal Glass Of Beer*) and directed by Clyde Bruckman, who did later remake and expand it two years later at Paramount as *The Man On The Flying Trapeze* with W. C. Fields. Hamilton tries to escape his wife and her wretched mother and brother-in-law so he can go to the wrestling match. He tells his boss his brother-in-law has died, getting the day off and causing an horrendous chain of events that lead to Hamilton's being accused of the Brother-in-law's murder. Even the later version's famous car parking scene is performed here first, with Hamilton trying to squeeze into a no parking zone between two cars under the watchful eye of an angry policeman.

Mack Sennett was in no great financial condition either, and he closed his studio in mid-1933, ending a great comedy tradition and Hamilton's only means of employment. His poor health and unstable personal life made most studios consider him unhirable. On October 5th, 1933, he was picked up and jailed, wandering the streets drunk. He was released the next day, then picked up and jailed for the same thing less than two weeks later.

Work was sporadic; Lloyd made an appearance in one of Paramount's *Hollywood On Parade* shorts that reunited him with former partner Bud Duncan, playing a photographer. Lloyd shows his "delight" in being with Bud again by kicking him in the pants.

It was as if *Move Along* was coming true. Like a subtitle in the film "with no place to go and no hurry to get there, he just kept moving until his feet gave out". His old friends stuck by him, those who were still in position themselves to do so, loaning him enough to survive and stay drunk on. Harry Edwards managed to land Hamilton supporting roles in several comedies he was directing for Educational. Hamilton appears halfway into a Billy Bevan comedy entitled *Pop's Pal* (December 29th, 1933). He looks very frail, his speech slurred, his old costume hangs on him. He gamely tries to cover up, but any physical gag or stunt, even running or riding a bicycle, is doubled by a stuntman.

Yet Lloyd Hamilton still had enough reputation as a good comedian that one last attempt to star him in two-reelers happened in early 1934. Producer/Director Sam Neufield shot a pilot two-reeler starring Hamilton for a proposed series of shorts



LLOYD V. HAMILTON
1891 – 1935

Lloyd Hamilton's grave in Porterville, California.

to be released independently. *Wedding Belles* still survives, showing Hamilton looking better than he did in *Pop's Pal,* and a decent cast of old friends support him including Ruth Hiatt, Eddie Gribbon, Gertrude Astor and Arthur Housman.

Shot mostly on location on an actual steamship, the short is basically Ham getting involved with various passengers, including running into Astor in several embarrassing or compromising though completely innocent situations much to the ire of her husband, Sea Captain Eddie Gribbon. Ham also messes up Arthur Housman's poker game, saves Ruth Hiatt from being forced to marry against her will, dresses up in drag and yes — one more time gets a fish down his pants. As Lloyd Hamilton's last starring short, *Wedding Belles* could be worse.

Finally his feet gave out. In late 1934, he entered the hospital with a bleeding ulcer. Diabetes had complicated his worsening cirrhosis, and he was also suffering from liver cancer. Around Christmas, he lapsed into a coma which he never came out of, and died on January 19th, 1935.

His death made few headlines in the Hollywood community. Some so-called "friends" were surprised to know he had been hospitalized. Movie audiences were treated to one last posthumous appearance by the comedian. At he end of the MGM all-star Technicolor short *Star Night At The Coconut Grove* (January 30th, 1935) we see Lloyd Hamilton, ill, tired, puffy, looking far older than his forty-three years, dressed as a cannibal chief, watching a bevy of Chorus girls dance a hula. The scene is chillingly ghoulish, watching this once great comedian, too ill to move, dressed in a costume similar to the one he wore in his greatest success *Robinson Crusoe Ltd*. It is a sad reminder of his former glory.

Lloyd Hamilton came so close, and yet, then and now, is still so far. Today, his work struggles to exist, even as he did in his final years. Some of it remains, who knows how much, ready to entertain and show the world what the rest of his contemporaries admired. Walter Kerr has said fate dogs the man, we can only hope it is merciful.

Stills and artwork from the collections of Richard M. Roberts, Sam Gill and Paul Gierucki.

This article was co-researched with Rob Farr and Joe Moore. Special Thanks to Sam Gill, Bo Bergland, Mike Hawks, The Margaret Herrick Library at the Center for Motion Picture Study/Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, The Library of Congress Motion Picture Division, William W. Storm of the Oakland History Room/Oakland Public Library, Steve Lavoie, assistant librarian of the Oakland Tribune, Jack Hardy/Grapevine Video, David Wyatt, David Glass, Glenn Mitchell, Brent Walker, Paul Gierucki, Thomas Reeder, Jere Guilden, Linda M. Shah, Rusty Casselton, Gordon Berkow, Herb Graff, Charles Tarbox.

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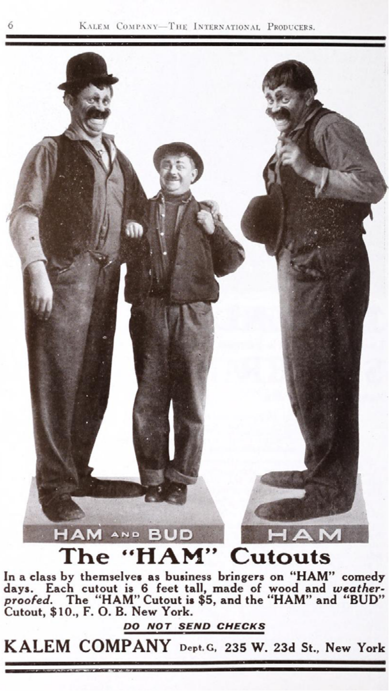
Richard M. Roberts says this space is too small for his bio and credits, and if you're reading this magazine, you probably know who the heck he is anyway.

Memorabilia



6 Kalem Company—The International Producers.

HAM AND BUD HAM

The "HAM" Cutouts

In a class by themselves as business bringers on "HAM" comedy days. Each cutout is 6 feet tall, made of wood and *weather-proofed*. The "HAM" Cutout is $5, and the "HAM" and "BUD" Cutout, $10., F. O. B. New York.

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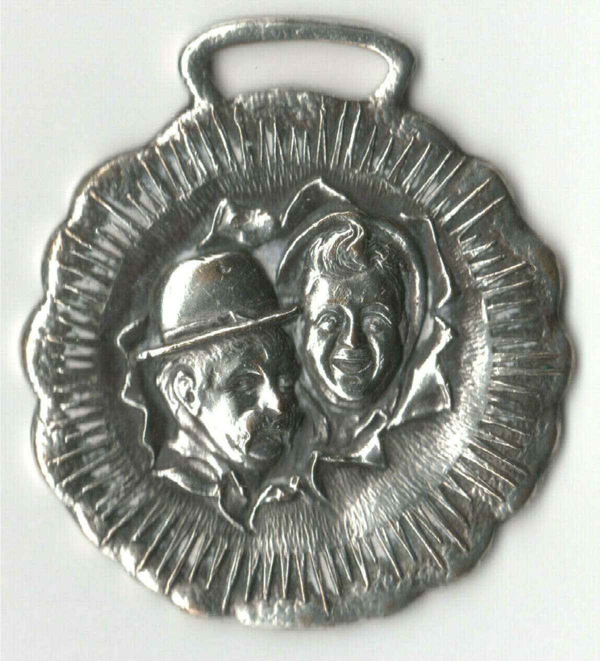
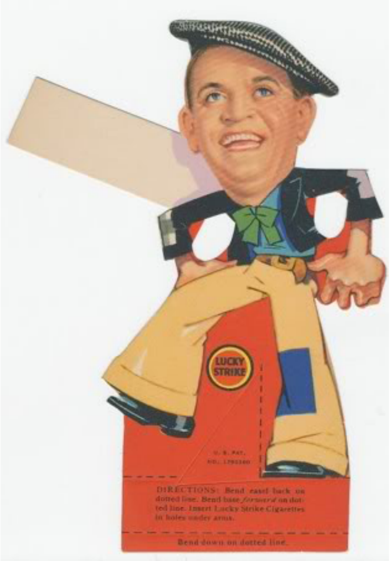
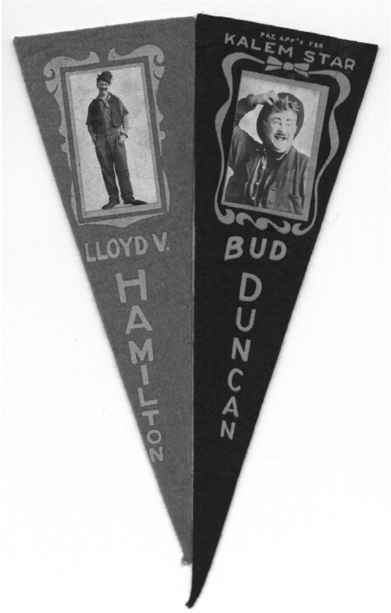



LUCKY STRIKE
DIRECTIONS: Bend easel back on dotted line. Bend base *forward* on dotted line. Insert Lucky Strike Cigarettes in holes under arms.
Bend down on dotted line.


LLOYD V. HAMILTON
PAT. APP'D FOR
KALEM STAR
BUD DUNCAN

LLOYD V. HAMILTON

TOP LEFT: The Kalem Ham and Bud merchandising has begun! Does anyone have the wooden standups today? In their attics perhaps? Scaring the crows in their cornfield?
CENTER: What the well-dressed man wears on his watch chain! A Ham and Bud Watch fob.
BOTTOM LEFT: Ham and Bud Fan pennants.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Lloyd Hamilton fan pennant in color.
TOP RIGHT: Lloyd Hamilton finger puppet giveaway,
something for smokers to do while they light up a Lucky!

Lloyd V. Hamilton

Filmography

Ruth Hiatt was probably Lloyd Hamilton's best leading lady and a good lifelong supportive friend.

LLOYD VERNON HAMILTON

b. Aug. 19, 1891, Oakland, CA
d. Jan. 19, 1935, Hollywood, CA
Married: Ethel Floyd and Irene Dalton

This filmography was compiled by Robert Farr with Richard M. Roberts and Joe Moore from research provided by Bo Berglund, Herbert Reynolds, Karel Caslavsky and the sources in the bibliography with special thanks to Sam Gill and Warren M. Sherk of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, Los Angeles and the staff of the Library of Congress Motion Picture Division, Washington, DC.

"It's neat, but not gaudy."
— L. V. HAMILTON

Studios: Production Co./Releasing Co.

1913 Lubin
1913-1914 St. Louis/"Frontier"/Universal
1914-1917 Kalem/General
1917-1919 Sunshine/Fox
1920-1922 Mermaid/Educational
1922-1931 Hamilton/Educational
1931-1932 Hamilton/Universal
1932-1933 Sennett/Paramount
1933-1934 Educational/Fox

Filmography Key:

day-month = release date
mpw = first mention in "Moving Picture World"
c. = copyright date
* = Print is known to be extant and an archival copy exists in the archive listed below. It is certain that many more prints exist than have been designated by the asterisk. Where no archive is listed, the film exists in a private collection or in a TV package. Though not asterisked, it is thought that most of the Educational sound shorts were released to television in the 1950s and '60s.

LC = Library of Congress Film Collection, Washington, D.C.
MOMA = Museum of Modern Art Film Collection, NY
NFA = Natl. Film Archive, London
UCLA = UCLA Film Archives, Los Angeles
CZECH = Československy Filmovy Ustav / Filmovy Archiv., Prague
DEN = Det Danske Filmmuseum, Copenhagen
ITAL = La Cineteca del Friuli, Italy
YUGO = Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, Yugoslavia
FPA = Film Preservation Associates (Blackhawk Films), Calif.
? = spurious or unconfirmed information, but arguably correct.
rls. = reels; p. = producer; sup. = supervisor; d. = director; w. = writer; s. or st. = story; ad. = adaptation; sc. = scenerio; asst.d. = assistant director; cnt. = continuity; dia. = dialogue; t = titles; ph. = photography; c. = cast; Except where noted, Hamilton is in the cast (usually the lead) of all films listed.

All films through September, 1917 are silent one-reelers.

1913:

Lubin Manufacturing Company:
No Known Titles.

Frontier Films (St. Louis Motion Picture Co.)/Universal Pictures:

7-31 *A Hasty Jilting* (c. Dot Farley, Victoria Forde, Joseph J. Franz) Comedy. A young swain sprains his ankle before a ball.
9-25 *The Village Pest* (c. Dot Farley) Comedy. Wallie (Ham) drives everyone crazy with his magic tricks.
10-30 *The Spirits Walk* (c. Evelyn (Eva) Thatcher, Joseph J. Franz, Buck Connors) Comedy. To get rid of an unwanted suitor, Eloise dares him to sleep in a haunted house.
11-29 *The Secret Of Balanced Rock* (Western drama concerning a lost mine.)
12-6 *The Circuit Rider Of The Hills* (c. Joseph J. Franz) Western drama. An old moonshiner (Ham) tries to break up his daughter's romance with the son of a revenuer.
12-13 *Out Of His Class* Western drama. A gambler sacrifices his life for the girl he loves.
12-20 *His Better Self* (c. Eva Thatcher) Drama. An alcoholic saves a girl from the evils of drink.

12-27 *His Father* (c. Edythe Sterling, Hampton Del Ruth, Betty Burbridge, Mrs. William H. Bainbridge, Joseph J. Franz) Western drama. A no-account father assists his son in the capture of a bandit.

1914:

1-3 *The Winning Stroke* (c. Hampton Del Ruth, Edythe Sterling, Joseph J. Franz, Mr. Burbridge, Mr. Chambers) Western drama. A Chicago detective tries to capture counterfeiters.

1-10 *Cross Roads* (c. Edythe Sterling, Hampton Del Ruth, Joseph P. Franz) Western drama. A battle ensues over a claim.

1-24 *Abide With Me* (c. Mae Wells, Edythe Sterling, Arthur Allardt, Joseph J. Franz) Western drama. A Quaker family adjusts to western life.

1-31 *The Turning Point* (c. Edythe Sterling, Arthur Allardt, Joseph J. Franz) Western drama. Two rivals, one good, one bad, fight for the hand of Nell.

2-7 *Put Yourself In His Place* (c. Arthur Allardt, Edythe Sterling, Joseph J. Franz) Drama. A desperate man steals $10 for medicine for his daughter.

Frontier Films (St. Louis Motion Picture Co.)/Universal Pictures:

2-21 *The Fatal Card* (c. Edythe Sterling, Arthur Allardt, Joseph J. Franz, Charles Huber) Western drama. An innocent man is almost executed when the guilty party is found hiding in the hanging tree.

2-28 *So Shall Ye Reap* (c. Arthur Allardt, Willis L. Robards, Edith Sterling, Joseph J. Franz)

3-5 *Pretzel Captures The Smugglers* * (c. Walter Rodgers, Harry Russell, Mae Wells, Betty Burbridge) (UCLA) Western comedy. Pretzel (Ham) is the leader of a band of inept border patrol agents.

3-12 *The Colonel Of The Nutts* (c. Harry Russell, Betty Burbridge, James S. Douglass) Comedy. Col. Pretzel is the proprietor of the Cuckooville County Nutt Factory, an insane asylum.

3-19 *Colonel Custard's Last Stand* (c. Mae Wells, Betty Burbridge, James S. Douglass, Harry Russell) Western comedy. Col. Custard (Ham) starts an Indian war while trying to break up his daughter's romance.

3-26 *Black Hands And Dirty Money* (c. Mae Wells, Betty Burbridge, James S. Douglass, Walter Rodgers) Comedy. Capt. Pretzel tries to break up a black hand gang.

4-2 *Why Kentucky Went Dry* (c. Betty Burbridge, Walter Rodgers, Mae Wells, James S. Douglass) Comedy. Col. Bourbon (Ham) and Col. Sourmash battle revenuers and each other.

4-9 *Pretzel's Baby* (c. Mae Wells, Betty Burbridge, Walter Rodgers) Comedy. Chief of Police Pretzel has marital trouble and a gang of counterfeiters to contend with.

4-16 *That Cuckooville Horse Race* * Comedy. Pretzel and Schnitzel agree to a horse race, but dope each other's horse.

4-23 *A Neighborly Quarrel* (c. Walter Rodgers, Mae Wells, Betty Burbridge, Roy Weddle) Comedy. Pretzel and Mike fight over a girl.

4-30 *Cuckooville Goes Skating* (c. Walter Rodgers, Mae Wells, Charles Hagenios, May Cruze) Comedy. Pretzel starts a skating rink in his town.

5-7 *Whistling Hiram* (c. May Cruze, Mae Wells, James S. Douglass, Walter Rodgers, Roy Weddle) Comedy. Flirtatious Hiram (Ham) falls for a married woman.

5-14 *Dad's Allowance* (c. James S. Douglass, Walter Rodgers, May Cruze) Comedy. Papa Huckleberry (Ham) cuts his spendthrift sons' allowances, so they teach him a lesson.

5-21 *Johnnie From Jonesboro* (c. Walter Rodgers, Mae Wells, May Cruze, Roy Weddle) Comedy. Grocers Johnnie Jones (Ham) and his father fall in love with a widow and her daughter.

5-28 *Hiram And Zeke Masquerade* (w./d./c. James S. Douglass; c. Mae Wells, May Cruze, Roy Weddle) Comedy. Back at the Cuckooville Skating Rink, Hiram (Ham) and Zeke pose as the world's greatest man and woman skating team.

Kalem Company, Inc./General Film Company:

7-31 *The Deadly Battle At Hicksville* (d. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, John E. Brennan) Two rivals fight each other in the Civil War.

8-7 *Don't Monkey With The Buzzsaw* (?) * (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, John E. Brennan, Laura Oakley, Victor Rottman) Ham has a bit as a cop, wearing his "Pretzel" makeup. (UCLA)

8-14 *A Substitute For Pants* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; w. William Courtney; c. John E. Brennan, Ruth Roland) Two political rivals compete for an election and a girl.

8-21 *Sherlock Bonehead* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. John E. Brennan, Chance E. Ward, Ruth Roland, Dick Rosson) Two detectives compete for the reward money offered for the capture of Captain Kidd.

8-28 *When Men Wear Skirts* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Fanny Yantis, John E. Brennan) Romantic misunderstandings in a barber shop.

9-11 *Ham, The Lineman* (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; w./c. Ruth Roland; c. Chance E. Ward, George Drumgold, Victor Rottman) Telephone lineman Ham flirts with the wrong wife.

10-2 *The Slavery Of Foxicus* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; w. Edwin Ray Coffin; c. Ruth Roland, H. L. Forbes, Victor Rottman) A burlesque of love and villainy in ancient Rome. Filmed in Santa Barbara, CA.

10-9 *The Tattered Duke* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Bud Duncan, Lucille Kellar, Chance Ward, Dick Rossen, Alice West) "Greasy Bill" (Ham) impersonates royalty.

10-16 *Si's Wonderful Mineral Spring* (d./w. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, F. Fralick, H. L. Forbes) Two rivals battle over a spring and a girl.

10-30 *Ham And The Villian Factory* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Victor Rottman) A strange dream leads to romantic confusion.

11-3 *Lizzie, The Life Saver* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Frank Lanning, Bud Duncan) Lizzie's new job of life-guard prompts a competition among her suitors to be saved from drowning.

11-13 *Ham, The Piano Mover* (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Dick Rossen, Bud Duncan) Piano movers Ham and Bud get involved in the Newlyweds' marital troubles.

11-17 *The Peach At The Beach* (d./w. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Bud Duncan, Lucille Kellar, Chance Ward, Dick Rosson) An amateur filmmaker at the beach prompts marital woes.

11-27 *Ham, The Iceman* (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Laura Woods, Bud Duncan, Ruth Roland, Porter Strong, Juanita Sponsler) Ham's flirtatiousness leads to his undoing.

12-1 *Bud, Bill And The Waiter* (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Bud Duncan, Ruth Roland) The old “fly in the food” trick fails to produce the expected results at an ice cream parlor where Ham and Bud are waiters.

12-11 *The Bold Banditti And The Rah Rah Boys* (d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Porter Strong, Alfred von Harder, Jack Dillon, Frank Lanning) Gangsters and students square off at Yarvard College.

12-15 *Cupid Backs The Winners* (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Fay Brierly, Bud Duncan, Tom Hayes, “The Kalem Baby”, Juanita Sponsler) Cupid creates romantic confusion in a household.

12-22 *The Winning Whiskers* * (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Marin Sais, Bud Duncan) (MOMA) A broad parody of detective pulps.

12-25 *The Reformation Of Ham* * (d./w. Marshall Neilan; c. Richard Coleman, Harry Hoffman) Two sailors have comic adventures in Kulangsu, China as they battle pirates and Ham battles the bottle.

12-29 *Love, Oil & Grease* * (d./w./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Ruth Roland, Tim Welsh, Bud Duncan) (ITAL) Ham and Bud play supporting roles as inept auto mechanics.

1915:

1-26 *A Model Wife* (1/2 rl; d./c. Marshall Neilan; c. Victor Rottman, Ruth Roland, Helen Norman, H. L. Forbes) Ham's wife must pose as an artist's model after losing her allowance at bridge.

2-12 *Ham And The Sausage Factory* * (c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee) (LC) As butchers, Ham and Bud find that little dogs make tasty sausages.

2-19 *A Melodious Mixup* (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Gerald Miller) Musicians Ham and Bud both fall for a married woman.

2-26 *Ham And The Jitney Bus* * (c. Bud Duncan) (LC) Ham and Bud buy an old auto for $15 and start a nickel bus service.

Note: Following are official “Ham Comedies” series releases in which Hamilton was teamed with Bud Duncan as “Ham and Bud”. All Kalem films which follow co-star Duncan.

3-16 *Ham At The Garbage Gentlemen's Ball* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Lloyd Hamilton and Bud Duncan; c. Bud Duncan, Marin Sais, Charles Inslee) Ham and Bud fight for the favor of the Queen of the Garbage Gentlemen's Ball.

3-23 *Ham Among The Redskins* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Lloyd Hamilton, Bud Duncan; c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee, Marin Sais) Ham and Bud embark on a career as professional Indian fighters. (NFA)

3-30 *Ham In The Harem* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Hamilton Smith; c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee, Marin Sais, Martin Kinney) Bootblacks Ham and Bud run afoul of a Sultan after pursuing Fatima, his favorite. (LC)

4-6 *Ham's Harrowing Duel* (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Marin Sais, Charles Inslee) Ham is hired to make a husband jealous.

4-13 *The “Pollywogs’” Picnic* (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee, Marin Sais, William Planett) Ham impersonates General Information at the picnic of the Ancient Order of United Pollywogs.

4-20 *Lotta Coin's Ghost* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Lloyd Hamilton, Bud Duncan; c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee, Marin Sais) Burglars Ham and Bud attempt to annex a valuable necklace (NFA, John Allen Archives)

4-27 *The Phoney Cannibal* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. C. Doty Hobart; c. Bud Duncan, Charles Inslee, Martin Kinney, Marin Sais) (MOMA) Seeing a missionary collect money after demonstrating the conversion of a cannibal, Ham tries to pass Bud off as a savage.

5-4 *“Ham's” Easy Eats* (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Hamilton Smith; c. Bud Duncan, Hylda Sloman, Agnes Copelin) Beggars Ham and Bud have comic adventures in their search for food.

5-11 *Rushing The Lunch Counter* (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Fernandez Galvez, George Drumgold) Ham and Bud create havoc at a lunch counter.

5-18 *The Liberty Party* (d. Chance E. Ward; w. Harry O. Hoyt; c. Bud Duncan, Gus Alexander, Martha Mattox) Escaped prisoners Ham and Bud pose as paperhangers.

5-25 *“Ham”, The Detective* (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Fernandez Galvez, Ethel Teare, Gus Alexander) “Modern Sherlock” Ham and “a pocket edition of Watson” Bud attempt to capture the bandit Guiseppe the Black.

6-1 *“Ham” In The Nut Factory* * (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, George E. Pearce, Fernandez Galvez, Ethel Teare, Martin Kinney, George Drumgold) The boys work in an insane asylum. (John Allen Archives)

6-8 *Ham At The Fair* (a/k/a *Ham's Giddy Outing*, British title) * (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, George Drumgold) Ham and Bud visit the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Diego and get taken by a pretty con artist. (LC)

6-15 *Raskey's Road Show* * (d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, Fernandez Galvez, Ethel Teare, Myrtle Sterling, Martin Kinney) Ham and Bud fall in love with circus performers.

6-22 *In High Society* * (d. Chance E. Ward; w. C. Doty Hobart; c. Bud Duncan, Walter Reid, Hylda Hollis, Ethel

Teare, Fernandez Galvez, Jack. W. McDermott) The boys crash a fancy dress ball bent on burglary. (NFA)

6-29 *The Merry Moving Men* * (a/k/a *On Tramp*, British title; d. Chance E. Ward; c. Bud Duncan, George Browins, Ethel Teare) Movers Ham and Bud would rather attend the circus. (NFA)

7-6 *Some Romance!* * (w. Frank Howard Clark; c. Bud Duncan, John Brownell, Ethel Teare, John McDermott, Harry De Roy) Street-sweeper Ham poses as a nobleman after recovering a lost necklace.

7-13 *A Flashlight Flivver* (c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Margaret Key, Bobbie Turnbull) Bud ruins Ham's photography business.

7-20 *The Spook Raisers* (c. Bud Duncan, Harry Griffith, Ethel Teare, Myrtle (Myrta) Sterling, Martin Kinney) Ham and Bud assist a shady spiritualist.

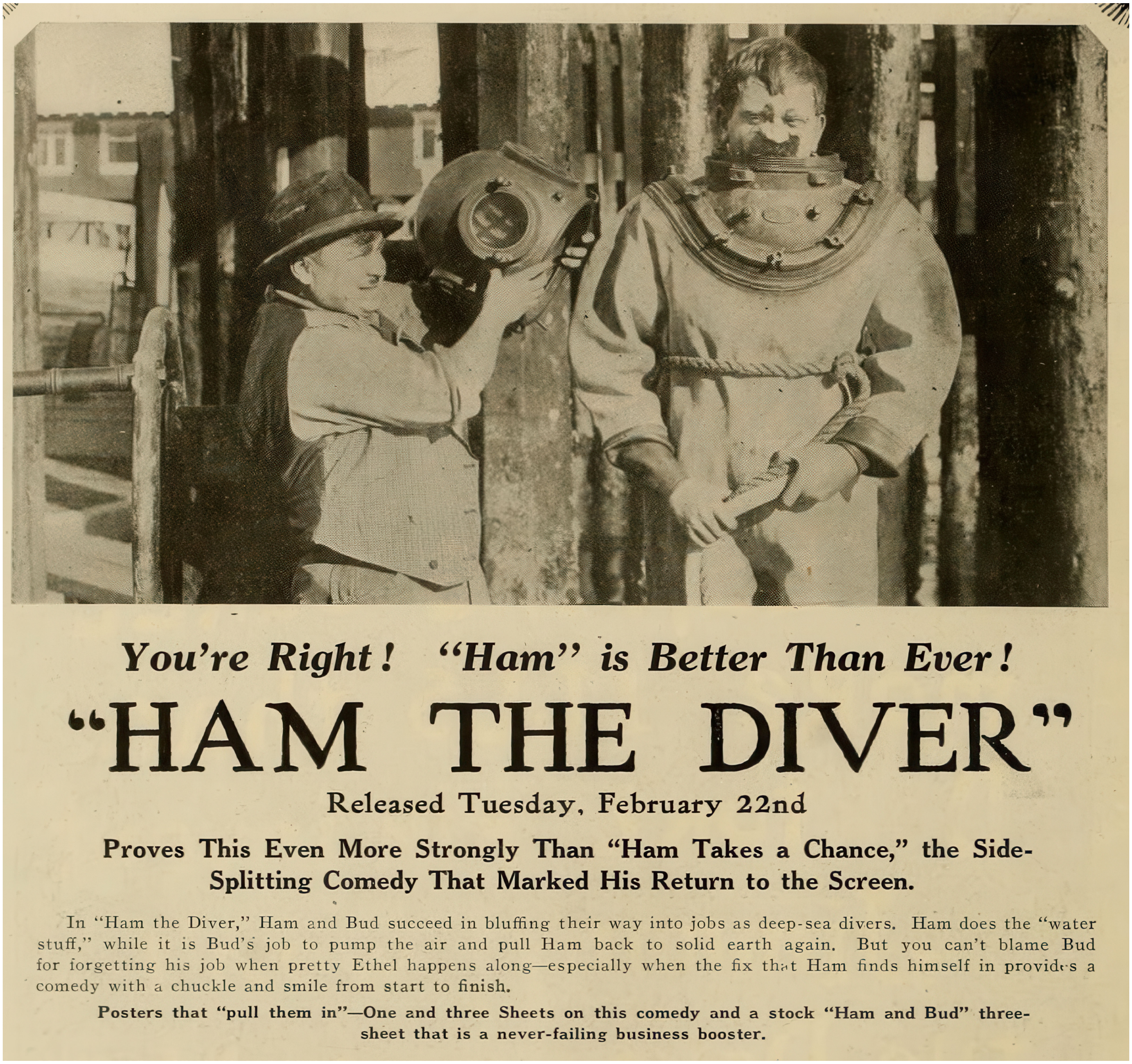
7-27 *Ham, The Statue* * (listed as *The Toilers*, working title in "Kalem Kalendar"; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Jack Sheehan) To win the heart of an art lover, Ham and Bud pose as statues of Roman gladiators. (LC)

8-3 *The Hypnotic Monkey* (c. Bud Duncan, Fernandez Galvez, Ethel Teare) Ham thinks that he has accidentally turned Bud into a monkey.

8-10 *The Winning Wash* (d. Rube Miller; c. Bud Duncan, J. Clifford, Harry Griffith, Ethel Teare) Slapstick in a Chinese laundry involving a lost roll of bills.

8-17 *Ham At The Beach* (d./w. Rube Miller; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Harry Griffith, J. Clifford) Ham and Bud vie for Fifi, a soubrette.

8-24 *Ham And The Experiment* (d. Rube Miller; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Betty Teare, Lucille West, Martin



You're Right! "Ham" is Better Than Ever!

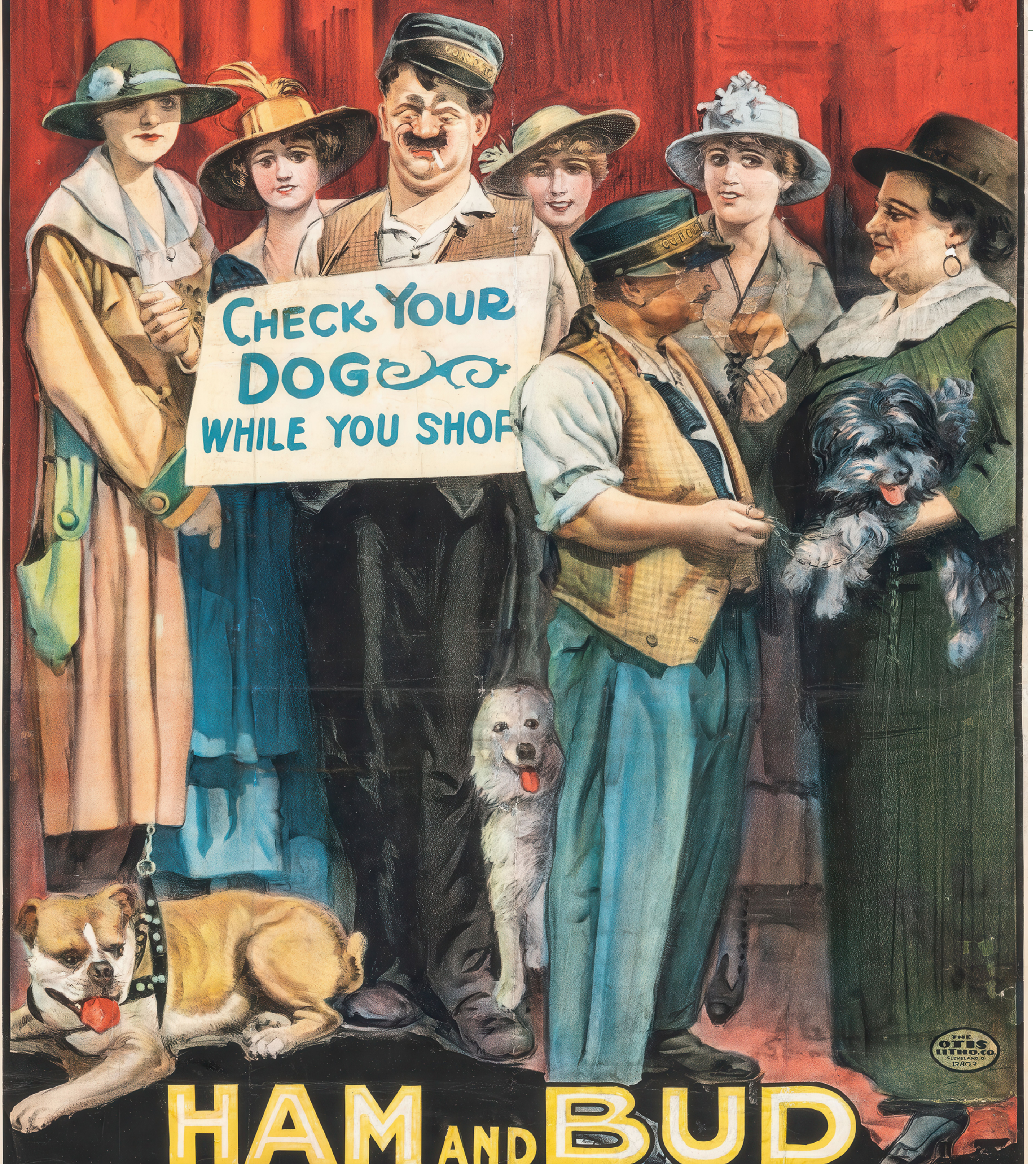
"HAM THE DIVER"

Released Tuesday, February 22nd

Proves This Even More Strongly Than "Ham Takes a Chance," the Side-Splitting Comedy That Marked His Return to the Screen.

In "Ham the Diver," Ham and Bud succeed in bluffing their way into jobs as deep-sea divers. Ham does the "water stuff," while it is Bud's job to pump the air and pull Ham back to solid earth again. But you can't blame Bud for forgetting his job when pretty Ethel happens along—especially when the fix that Ham finds himself in provides a comedy with a chuckle and smile from start to finish.

Posters that "pull them in"—One and three Sheets on this comedy and a stock "Ham and Bud" three-sheet that is a never-failing business booster.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HAM AND BUD

IN THE COMEDY SURPRISE

THE ALASKAN MOUSE HOUND

GENERAL FILM SERVICE

Kinney, Fernandez Galvez, Margaret Keys) Ham and Bud, "martyrs to the cause of science", test an experimental love potion.

Note: At this point, Hamilton sustained an injury which kept him off the screen until 1916. The series continued with Bud Duncan playing the lead in 24 films.

12-7 *Minnie The Tiger* (d. William Beaudine; w. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Charles Inslee, Harry Griffith. Hamilton does not appear in this film) Bud faces down a man-eating tiger, thus winning the heart of Ethel.

1916:

2-15 *Ham Takes A Chance* * (d. William Beaudine; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Gus Leonard, Jack MacDermott) (MOMA/CZECH) Ham and Bud work backstage and perform in a vaudeville act.

2-22 *Ham, The Diver* (d. William Beaudine; w. Lloyd Hamilton, Bud Duncan; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Jack MacDermott, Juanita Sponsler) Ham gets a job as a diver and has the misfortune of having Bud as his air pumper.

2-29 *Winning The Widow* * (a/k/a *Ham And The Husband*, British title; d. William Beaudine; s. Frank Howard Clarke; c. Bud Duncan, Jack MacDermott, Adoni Fovieri, Gus Leonard, Martin Kinney) The boys fall for a widow whose husband is still living. (NFA)

3-7 *Maybe Moonshine* (w./d. William Beaudine; c. Bud Duncan, Adoni Fovieri, Porter Strong, Gordon Griffith, Wesley Barry, Mignon Fovieri) The feuding families of Ham and Bud decide to join forces against a revenue agent.

3-14 *Ham Agrees With Sherman* * (ph. Harry Thorpe; c. Bud Duncan, Porter Strong, Norma Nicholls) Ham & Bud are shot down over enemy territory and are threatened by a beautiful spy.

3-21 *For Sweet Charity* (c. Bud Duncan, Porter Strong, Norma Nicholls, A. Edmondson, Julie Cruze, Juanita Sponsler, Ed Valentine) Ham & Bud create havoc in the charity bazaar's kissing booth.

3-28 *Ham And The Hermit's Daughter* (c. Bud Duncan, Porter Strong, Norma Nicholls, Julie Cruze, Victor Rottman) Surveyers Ham & Bud fall for a hermit's daughter and are blown "999,999 miles in the air" by Dad.

4-4 *From Alter To Halter* (c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls, Myrta Sterling) The boys are henpecked husbands, but Bud learns how to achieve dominance.

4-11 *Millionaires By Mistake* (c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls) After inheriting $1,000,000, Ham & Bud are beset by golddiggers, swindlers and vamps.

4-18 *Ham And Preparedness* (c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls, Juanita Sponsler) Our heros are caught up in the Mexican revolution.

4-25 *Ham's Waterloo* (d. Harry Edwards; c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls) Ham & Bud battle over matrimonial rights to Norma with a firehose.

5-2 *Ham And The Masked Marvel* * (d. Harry Edwards; c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls) Ham is a wrestler forced to fight the husband of a woman he flirted with. Bud is his second. (LC)

5-9 *The Tank Town Troupe* (d. Harry Edwards; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson, Norma Nicholls) The Balance Brothers (Ham & Bud) get mixed up with the sheriff's daughter.

5-23 *Ham's Busy Day* (d. Harry Edwards; c. Bud Duncan, Norma Nicholls, A. Edmondson) Hospital patient Bud is making time with his nurse when Ham tries to horn in.

Note: According to a "Moving Picture World" article of Nov. 11, 1916, Hamilton had directed all the "Ham" films during the previous six months. Where this could not be confirmed, there is a "?" after Hamilton's directorial credit.

5-30 *A Bunch of Flivvers* (d. Harry Edwards?, Lloyd Hamilton?; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson, Norma Nicholls) In their pursuit of Norma, the boys destroy one flivver after another (as long as they have $1.98 to buy new ones).

6-6 *Midnight at the Old Mill* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson) In this scare comedy, Ham & Bud work for a weird doctor who performs strange experiments. (LC)

6-13 *The Alaskan Mouse Hound* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson) * *Note:* According to Herb Reynolds, *The Boot and the Loot* has been misidentified under this title in the Library of Congress Film Archives. A lost and valuable Alaskan Mouse Hound is found by Ham & Bud.

6-20 *The Beggar and His Child* (d./w. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson, Mrs. Dunlap) Ham passes Bud off as a homeless waif.

6-27 *Ham, the Explorer* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Eileen Godsay) Trashpickers Ham and Bud journey to Africa in search of treasure. (MOMA)

7-4 *The Peach Pickers* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, A. Edmondson, Eileen Godsay, Freddie Fraelick) Ham and Bud are compulsive flirts who run afoul of "Big Bill".

7-11 *The Baggage Smashers* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Eileen Godsay, Freddie Fraelick, A. Edmondson, Mrs. Dunlap) The boys get jobs as baggage handlers in a tough western town to be near a pretty telegrapher.

7-18 *The Great Detective* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Eileen Godsay, A. Edmondson) Ham is a private eye hired to follow Mrs. Worry's husband. (LC)

7-25 *Ham's Whirlwind Finish* * (d.? Harry Edwards, Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) The boys run afoul of the sons of Italy when they get hired as cooks for a gang of ditch-diggers.(LC)

8-1 *The Heart Menders* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare) (DEN) Janitors Ham and Bud pose as divorce lawyers.

8-8 *Good Evening, Judge!* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud

Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham and Bud enter a life of crime when they take over a pawnshop that is really a fencing operation.

8-15 *Ham's Strategy* (working title, *The Donkey Did It*; d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham takes Ethel for a ride on a recalcitrant donkey and is waylaid by Bud.

8-22 *Star Boarders* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson, Myrta Sterling) The boys strip a boarding house of all its furnishings after being evicted for not paying the rent.

8-29 *Ham in the Drug Store* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham and Bud run a pharmacy with disasterous results.

9-5 *Ham the Fortune Teller* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham and Bud become gyspy fortune tellers.

9-12 *Patented By Ham* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham invents a brilliant new gasoline substitute... making Bud push the car.

9-19 *The Mud Cure* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; w. Lloyd Hamilton, Bud Duncan; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Bud has a wild dream in the dentist's chair.

9-26 *Bumping the Bumps* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) Ham poses as a phrenologist to undo Bud's romance.

10-3 *One Step Too Far* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare) Ham and Bud find themselves on opposite sides of the law.

10-10 *The Love Magnet* * (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, A. Edmondson) (LC) The boys have a magnet which attracts beautiful women, but when it's polarity is reversed, it attracts old crones.

10-17 *A Sauerkraut Symphony* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch, A. Edmondson) (LC) At the Spondolix Sauerkraut Factory, Ham and Bud battle for Ethel's affections.

10-24 *The Bogus Booking Agents* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; w./c. Henry Murdoch; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare) The boys take over a booking agency, and accept a $5000 offer to keep Ethel off the stage.

10-31 *The Merry Motor Menders* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) As garage owners, Ham and Bud drum up business by puncturing passing motorists' tires.

11-7 *A Desperate Duel* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham duels with a Frenchman over Ethel.

11-14 *The New Salesmen* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) After mistaking a store detective for a masher, Ham and Bud get jobs as salesmen.

11-21 *Rival Fakers* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud are bellhops who aid a pretty medicine tonic touter.

11-28 *Dudes For a Day* (d. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch, A. Edmondson) The boys get jobs as sandwich board men with Kluck's Klassy Klothes.

12-5 *Jailbirds* (d. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud incur the wrath of Rol L. Flush, the gambling prince, but the tables are turned when they become his jailers.

12-12 *The Iceman and the Artist* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton, Henry Murdoch; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare) After seeing how popular icemen are with the ladies, Ham and Bus set up shop for themselves.

Note: The following three films were released as "Ham" Comedies, but Hamilton was not in the cast —

12-19 *The Fatal Violin* (d. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) Bud gets mixed up with a gang of anarchists and plays a loaded violin at a rich woman's party.

12-26 *The Quest of the Golden Goat* (c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch, Ethel Teare) Bud steals the Golden Goat from a cult of worshippers.

1917:

1-2 *That Terrible Tenderfoot* (d./c. Henry Murdoch; c. Bud Duncan) Bud is hired as a bouncer in a tough Western saloon.

Hamilton returns in the role of "Ham":

1-9 *Rival Romeos* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; sc. S. A. Van Petten; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) A matrimonial agency sends Ham and Bud to the park to meet the same girl.

1-16 *Cupid's Caddies* (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) The boys play matchmaker for Prince Poppycock.

1-23 *The Blundering Blacksmiths* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham is a blacksmith who bends iron rods into horseshoes. (FPA)

1-30 *The Safety Pin Smugglers* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Working separately, Ham and Bud try to stop a smuggling ring. (MOMA)

2-6 *Ghost Hounds* (d.?/c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) For stealing chickens, Ham & Bud are sentenced to spend a night in a haunted house.

2-13 *The Model Janitor* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) (LC) Ham poses as an Indian for an artist.

2-20 *A Flyer in Flapjacks* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) (LC as *Flapjacks*?) In order to evade the law, Ham and Bud get jobs cooking pancakes.

week of 3-5 *Efficiancy Experts?* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud invent a crazy automatic lawnmower. (DEN)

week of 3-17 *Bulls or Bullets?* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare, Henry Murdoch) Ham is a fearless bullfighter and Bud is his faithful matador. (LC)

week of 3-25 *The Bogus Bride* (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) The town of Pottsville offers a reward to the first couple who wed, so Ham & Bud tie the knot.

mpw. 4-7 *A Misfit Millionaire* (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) Ham is the owner of the Swell Dishwasher Co. and Bud is his lowly office boy.

mpw. 4-14 *The Deadly Doughnut* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) (LC) Bakers Ham and Bud mix dough with dynamite with disasterous results.

mpw. 4-28 *Hard Times in Hardscrapple* (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) The boys buy a restaurant in a tough western town

mpw. 4-28 *Doubles and Troubles* (d. Al Santell; asst.d. Harry Schenk; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud make enemies when they get jobs as bouncers.

mpw. 5-12 *Bandits, Beware!* (a/k/a *Bandit, Beware!*) (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud rescue a rich man's daughter from highwaymen.

mpw. 5-26 *A Menagerie Mixup* (working title, *Bear Facts*) (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, John Steppling, Henry Murdoch, Edythe Sterling) The boys pose as escaped bears and meet each other in a cave.

mpw. 6-2 *The Hobo Raid* (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch, John Steppling, Edythe Sterling) Ham and Bud rescue a farmer's daughter from a band of hoboes.

mpw. 6-23 *A Day Out Of Jail* (working title, *A Jail Jam*) (d. Al Santell, Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch, John Steppling, Juanita Sponsler) Ham and Bud escape from jail, and Ham finds a job as a policeman.

mpw. 6-30 *Seaside Romeos* * (d./c. Lloyd Hamilton; c. Bud Duncan, John Steppling, Juanita Sponsler, Henry Murdoch) Ham dreams of buried trasure and girls on the island of Silken Seaweed.

10-3 *Politics in Pumpkin Center* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Juanita Sponsler, John Steppling, Henry Murdoch) (LC) Ham is the mayor, fire chief and everything else in a small town. Bud is his assistant everything.

10-10 *The Boot and the Loot* * (working title, *Honesty Is the Best Policy?*) (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Henry Murdoch, Edythe Sterling, John Steppling) (LC misidentified as *The Alaskan Mouse Hound*) Ham trades the stolen uniform of a streetcar conductor to an Italian for a bootblack stand. Then the boys track a thief to a millionaire's mansion.

10-17 *A Whirlwind Of Whiskers* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, Marin Sais, R. E. Bradbury, Edward Clisbee) Ham and Bud are detectives who track their man to a barber shop. (LC)

10-24 *The Onion Magnate's Revenge* (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, John Steppling, Edward Clisbee, True Boardman?, R. E. Bradbury, Juanita Sponsler, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud steal from an onion magnate who won't pay his bill.

10-31 *The Bath Tub Bandit* * (d. Al Santell; c. Bud Duncan, John Steppling, True Boardman?, R. E. Bradbury, Juanita Sponsler, Henry Murdoch) Ham and Bud are cops out to capture a thief with a bathtub mania. The series' final image is that of the team being blown to bits by a cannon.

Unless noted, all films through 1928 are silent two-reelers:

Sunshine Comedies/Fox Film Corp. — all Sunshine Comedies supervised and produced by Henry Lehrman:

11-11 *Roaring Lions And Wedding Bells* (sc. Henry Lehrman; d. William Campbell, Jack White & Henry Lehrman? [according to "Variety"]; asst.d. Al Ray; ph. R. D. Armstrong; c. Mildred Lee, Charles Dorety, Jack Richardson, Jess Welden [and, according to "Variety", Jimmie Adams, Tom Wilson, Mario Bianchi]) LP 11529 A rejected suitor sends a lion as a wedding gift.

12-23 *Damaged — No Goods* (d. Jay A. Howe, Jack White; ph. William McGann; c. Gertude Selby, Mildred Lee, Dave Morris?, Lloyd Hamilton?) LP 11480 Romantic misunderstandings lead to a traffic melee.

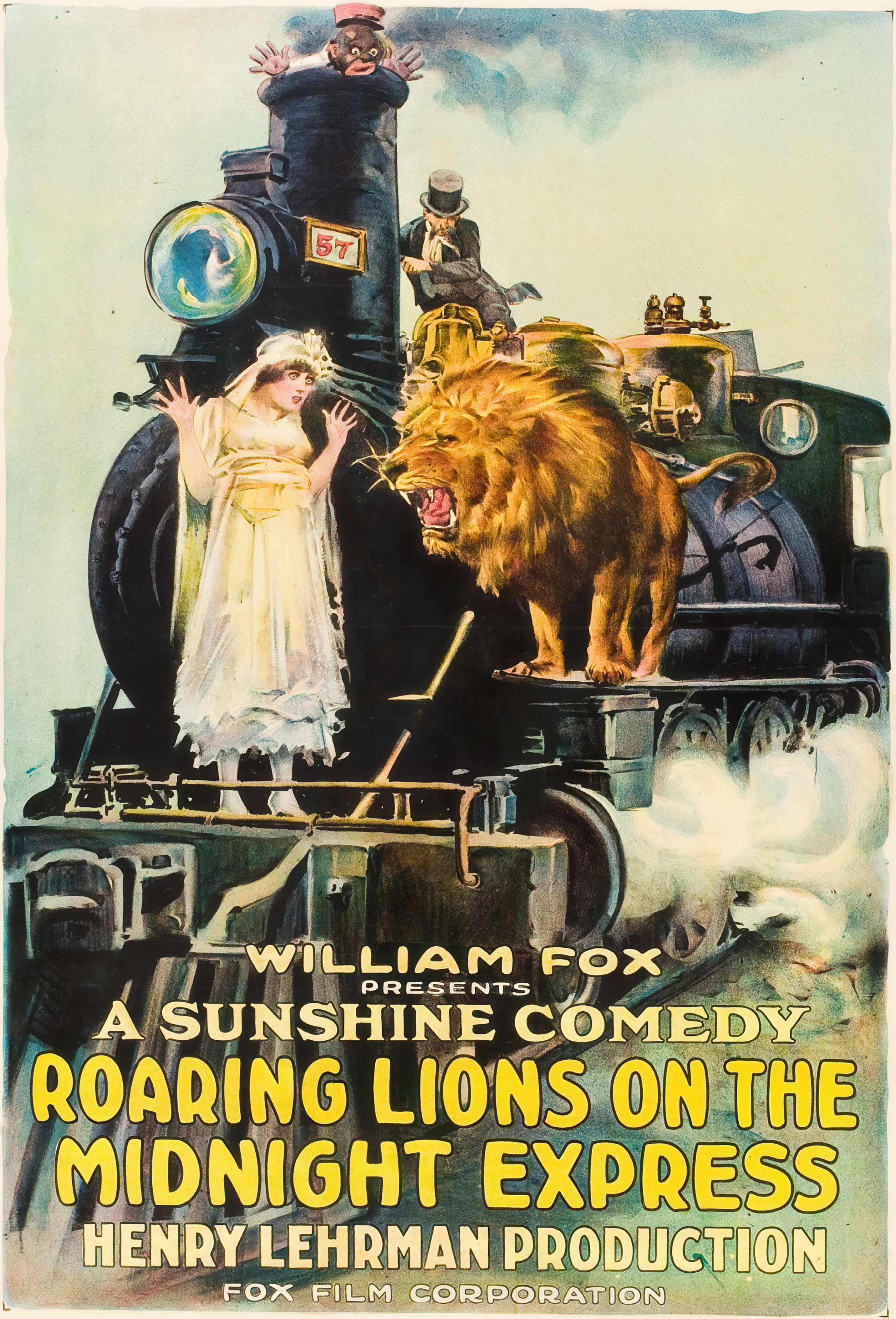
1918:

2-3 *Hungry Lions In A Hospital* * (st./sc. Henry Lehrman; d. Jack White; ph. R. D. Armstrong, A. Vallet; c. Mildred Lee, Jimmie Adams, Tom Wilson, Ethel & Gene [lions]) LP 11961 Escaped lions create havoc in a hospital.

4-7 *A Waiter's Wasted Life* (d. Jack White, William H. Watson; sc. Henry Lehrman; c. Eileen Percy, Jimmie Adams, Anita Burrell, Tom Kennedy) LP 12283 An escaped convict takes refuge in a restaurant where Ham works as a waiter.

7-28 *A Tight Squeeze* * (d. Jack White, William H. Watson; ph. George Meehan; c. Ethel Teare, Jimmie Adams, Charles Dorety, Tom Kennedy, Dave Morris, Frank Coleman, Fritz Schade, Frank Hays, Hazel Dean, Mae Eccleston) LP 12713 (CZECH) Farm boy Ham is the butt of a variety of animals.

9-22 *Roaring Lions On The Midnight Express* * (d. Henry Lehrman; ph. Frank Good; c. Hugh Fay, Billie Ritchie, Jimmie Adams, Monty Banks, Dave Morris, Frank Coleman, Slim Summerville, Jack Cooper, Sylvia Day, Mae Eccleston, Charles Dudley) LP 12899 (CZECH) Ham does a bit in blackface as a chef aboard a train carrying loose lions.



WILLIAM FOX
PRESENTS
A SUNSHINE COMEDY

ROARING LIONS ON THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS

HENRY LEHRMAN PRODUCTION
FOX FILM CORPORATION

ALPHA LITHO CO INC N.Y.

11-17 *Mongrels* (d. Jack White; ph. George Meehan; c. Gertrude Selby, Charles Dorety, Jimmie Adams, Dave Morris) LP 13066 Ham battles spies in a munitions factory.

12-29 *The Son Of A Hun* (d. Jack White; ph. George Meehan; c. Gertrude Selby, Charles Dorety, Dave Morris, Jimmie Adams) LP 13212 Ham must deal with German spies on his wedding day.

1919:

2-23 *His Musical Sneeze* * (d. Jack White; ph. Cecil Myers; c. Virginia Rappe, Glen Cavender, Frank Coleman, Jimmie Adams) LP 13463 Two rivals compete for Virginia during a hunting expedition.

1920:

Associated First National Film Corp.:

1-24 *A Twilight Baby* * (3 rls; p. Henry Lehrman; d. Jack White; c. Virginia Rappe, Billie Ritchie, Harry Todd, Charles Dorety, Harry McCoy, Lige Conley) (MOMA) Cowardly Ham, released from prison for bootlegging, competes for the affections of Virginia.

Mermaid Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

8-7 *Duck Inn* (p. Jack White; d. Gilbert W. Pratt; c. Marvel Rea, Monty Banks) Two members of a duck hunting club vie for the same woman.

Lew Cody Films Corp./L. J. Gasnier Productions:

9-29 *Occasionally Yours* (5 rls; d. James W. Horne; sc. H. Tipten Steck; s. Elmer Forst; ph. Joseph A. DuBray; c. Lew Cody, Betty Blythe, J. Barney Sherry; Elinor Fair, Yvonne Gardelle, Cleo Ridgely, LH billed eighth as "Bob Hale") LP 15299 Lovers match and mismatch in this romantic comedy involving a practical joke.

* *Note:* This film was copyrighted on 5-29-20 as *The Mischief Man*.

Mermaid Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

10-20 *Dynamite* * (p. Jack White; d. Gilbert W. Pratt; c. Ray Berger, Iva Brown, Joe Murphy, Larry Bowes, Jess Welden, Jimmie Adams?) Ham gets a job in an explosives factory.

10-24 *The Simp* * (p. Jack White; d. Owen Davis, Arthur Roche; c. Marvel Rea, Otto Fries, Jess Welden) (NFA) Ham competes with Otto for the affections of Marvel.

* *Note:* Often confused with a Sunshine/Fox Al St. John release of the same title in March, 1921.

11-21 *April Fool* * (p. Jack White; d./c. Charles Parrott; c. Bee Monson, Otto Fries) Ham is shanghaied and forced to crew for a tough ship's captain. Situation from Charlie Chaplin's *Shanghaied* (1915) and later used in Buster Keaton's *The Love Nest* (1923).

1921:

4-9? *Moonshine* * (p. Jack White; d/c. Charles Parrott; c. Otto Fries, Bee Monson, Bill White) Ham is a hillbilly moonshiner dodging revenue agents.

4-24 *The Greenhorn* (p. Jack White; d. Charles Riesner) Ham plays a yokel pursued by Bolshevists. In this one, he dons both drag and blackface.

Henry Lehrman Comedies / Associated First National Film Corp.:

July *A Game Lady* (p. Henry Lehrman; d. Noel Smith; c. Phil Dunham) LP 16716(6-28-21) LP 16979(9-21-21) Duck hunters engage in an extended Lehrman chase.

Mermaid Comedies / Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

8-14 *Robinson Crusoe, Ltd.* (p./d. Jack White; w. Archie Mayo; c. Irene Dalton) Ham is shipwrecked on an island inhabited by hostile natives.

9-15 *The Vagrant* * (p. Jack White; d./c. Hugh Fay; w. Archie Mayo; c. Tom Wilson, Lige Conley, Irene Dalton, Frank Coleman) (MOMA/CZECH) In order to avoid arrest for vagrancy, Ham tries hold down a job.

11-20 *The Advisor* (p. Jack White; d. Hugh Fay; c. Irene Dalton) Ham plays a lawyer whose client, when convicted, threatens vengence. The film opens with Ham advising Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan.

1922:

1-15 *Rolling Stones* (p. Jack White; d. Hugh Fay; w. Archie Mayo; c. Bobby deVilbiss, Coy Watson, Jr., Irene Dalton)

3-12 *The Rainmaker* (p. Jack White; d. Hugh Fay; c. Irene Dalton)

6-18 *Poor Boy* (p. Jack White; d. Hugh Fay; w. Archie Mayo; c. Irene Dalton)

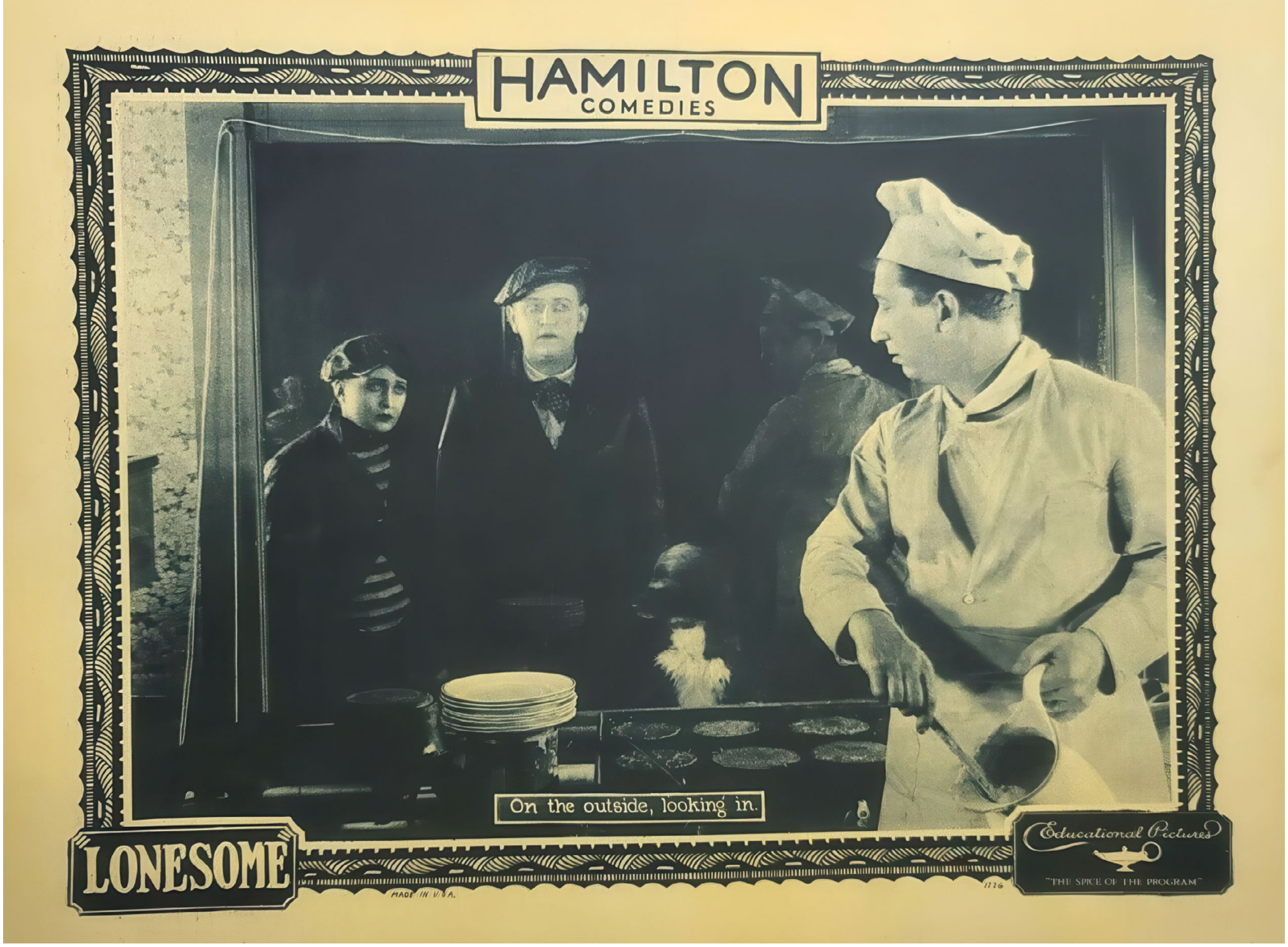
Hamilton Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

9-24 *The Speeder* (d./c. Lloyd Bacon, Hugh Fay; w. Archie Mayo; c. Ruth Hiatt) Ham spends his life savings on a new car.

11-19 *The Educator* (d./c. Lloyd Bacon; w. Archie Mayo; c. Ruth Hiatt, Otto Fries, Orral Humphrey) Ham is the new teacher in a backwoods school.

1923:

1-14 *No Luck* (d./c. Lloyd Bacon, Hugh Fay; w. Archie Mayo; c. Ruth Hiatt, Coy Watson, Jr., Bobby deVilbiss, Lloyd Bacon, Tom Kennedy, Tom McGuire, Estella Hickman)



* *Note:* Not to be confused with a 1922 Arrow release of the same name.

2-25 *Extra!, Extra!* (d./c. Lloyd Bacon; c. Ruth Hiatt, Russell Joy, Charlie Force?) Ham is a newspaper photographer who looks like a wanted anarchist.

3-25 *Uneasy Feet* (d. Noel Smith?) While visiting the city, country boy Ham has to replace his torn clothes under the suspicious eye of a cop.

5-13 *F.O.B.* (d./c. Lloyd Bacon, Hugh Fay; sc. Archie Mayo; c. Ed Kennedy, Lew Morrison, C. L. Davidson, Eddie Flaif, Bill White, Buddy the Dog) After polluting the Phily-burg water supply, Ham and his dog are forced to leave town in the company of hoboes.

Famous Players-Lasky Corp.:

8-19 *Hollywood* (8 rls; d. James Cruze; s. Frank Condon; ad. Tom Geraghty; ph. Karl Brown; c. Hope Drown, Luke Cosgrave, George K. Arthur, Ruby Lafayette, Harris Fordon, Bess Flowers, LH was one of many star cameos.) LP 19202

Hamilton Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

9-9 *The Optimist* * (d. Gilbert W. Pratt; c. Ruth Hiatt, Hank Mann, Lloyd Bacon, Percy Hildebrand, Andrew Arbuckle, Del Lorice) Ham is a "sunshine spreader" in the days of the puritans.

1924:

1-13 *My Friend* (d. Fred Hibbard; c. Ruth Hiatt) Ham is a war veteran beset by dogs.

2-24 *Lonesome* (d. Gilbert W. Pratt; c. Ruth Hiatt) Ham's sister and mother hunt for him after a twenty year absence.

G & H Pictures Corp.:

3-16 *His Darker Self* * (5 rls; d. Jack Noble; t. Ralph Spence; s. Arthur Caesar; c. LH billed first as "Claude Sappington", Tom Wilson, Tom O'Malley, Lucille LaVerne, Irma Harrison, Edna May Sperl, Warren Cook, Sally Long, Kate Bruce) LP 20905 To solve the murder of a family servant, detective writer Ham must wear black-face and infiltrate a crooked juke joint.

* *Note:* Two-reel condensation only version extant. (LC)

Hamilton Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

4-6 *Killing Time* (d. Fred Hibbard; c. Ruth Hiatt, Lloyd Bacon, June Marlowe, Dick Sutherland) Ham is a milk-wagon driver who teaches etiquette to a newly wealthy sheep herder.

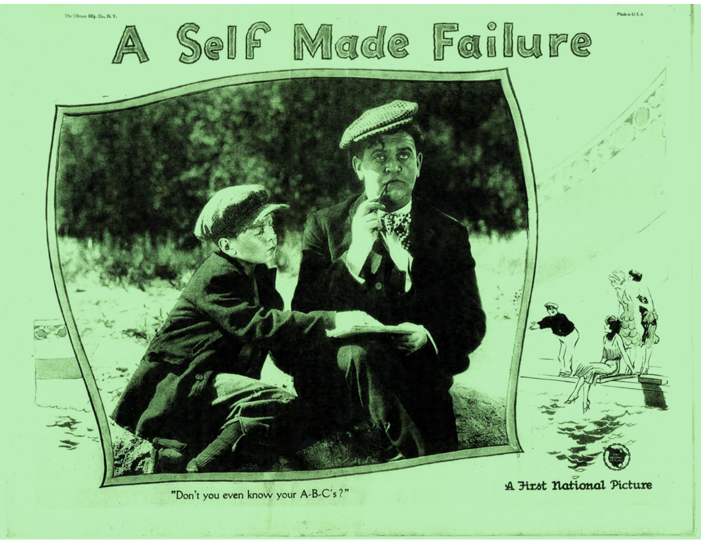
5-11 *Going East* (d. Fred Hibbard; c. Ruth Hiatt, Dick Sutherland) Slapsick comedy aboard an Eastbound train.

6-8 *Good Morning* * (d./c. Lloyd Bacon; Ruth Hiatt, Dick Sutherland) A newspaper boy rescues a debutante's dog and is invited to a society bazaar.

J. K. McDonald Productions/First National Pictures, Inc.:

6-29 *A Self-Made Failure* (8 rls; d. William Beaudine; st. J. K. McDonald; sc. Violet Clarke, Lex Neal, John Grey; ad. Tamar Lane; ph. Ray June, Barney McGill; c. Ben Alexander, LH billed second as "Breezy", Matt Moore, Patsy Ruth Miller, Mary Carr, Sam DeGrasse, Chuck Riesner, Victor Potel, Dan Mason, Harry Todd, Alta Allen, Doris Duane, Joel McRea (?), "Cameo") LP 20483 Ham and young Ben are drifters who pass through a small town.

* *Note:* Not extant. Trailer is in LC collection.



Lloyd Hamilton Corp./Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

9-21 *Jonah Jones* * (d./w. Fred Hibbard; c. Babe London, Dorothy Seastrom, Dick Sutherland) LP 20612 Ham is a country boy who gets mixed up in a high-society wedding.

11-23 *Crushed* * (d./w. Fred Hibbard; c. Dorothy Seastrom, Blanche Payson, Ford Sterling, Robert McKenzie, Tommy Hicks) (MOMA/CZECH) LP 20798 Ham and a duck cause havoc on the subway (gags from Harold Lloyd's *Hot Water* (1924).

1925:

2-8 *Hooked* * (d./w. Fred Hibbard; c. Dorothy Seastrom, Kewpie Morgan, Dick Sutherland, Tommy Hicks) LP 21099 After a failed fishing trip, Ham inadvertently boards Dorothy's ocean liner.

3-8 *Half A Hero* (d./w. Fred Hibbard; c. William Horn, Dorothy Seastrom, Babe London) LP 21226 Rookie cop Ham must referee a brutal prize fight.

Mermaid Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

3-15 *Hello, Hollywood* (p. Jack White; d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Lige Conley, Lee Moran, Cliff Bowes, Otto Fries, Virginia Vance, Jack Lloyd, Robert Kortman) LP 21228 Lige tries to crash Hollywood and meets Lloyd Hamilton in a movie studio.

Lloyd Hamilton Corp./Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

5-3 *King Cotton* (d. Hugh Fay; c. Dorothy Seastrom, William Dwyer, Glen Cavender, "Moonlight") LP 21494 Cotton-picker Ham loses his clothes and is forced to don drag and blackface.

7-19 *Waiting* * (d. Stephen Roberts; c. Ruth Hiatt, Glen Cavender, Otto Fries, Jack Lloyd, Bill Blaisdell, Thomas Jefferson?) LP 21677 (CZECH) Ham trails his girlfriend and rival to a restaurant, where he takes jobs as a dishwasher and a waiter.

10-4 *The Movies* * (d./w. William Goodrich; c. Marcella Daly, Arthur Thalasso, Frank Jonasson, Glen Cavender, Florence Lee, Robert Brower) LP 21901 Ham doubles for actor Lloyd Hamilton in Hollywood.

12-6 *Framed* * (d. Stephen Roberts; c. James Kelly, Virginia Vance, Ruth Hiatt, Otto Fries, Peg O'Neill) LP 22275 Ham destroys a photographer's studio, a magic act, and foils a robbery.

1926:

2-7 *Careful Please* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Marcella Daly, Dick Sutherland, Louise Carver, Eddie Boland, Stanley Blystone, Leslie Sutherland) LP 22437 Ham is a bill collector in a tough neighborhood where he falls for a vamp.

4-4 *Nobody's Business* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Dick Sutherland, Stanley Blystone, Eddie Boland, Helen McNair, James Kelly) LP 22657 Ham sells spiked coffee at his beachside hot dog stand.

6-6 *Nothing Matters* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Anita Garvin, Stanley Blystone) LP 23228 Ham is a private detective who follows a gang of con men to a Chinese opium den.

6-27 *Here Comes Charlie* (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Stanley Blystone, Virginia Vance, Glen Cavender) LP 22847 Ham gets a job as a floorwalker where chaos reigns.

7-25 *Move Along* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Helen Foster, Glen Cavender, Jack Lloyd, Otto Fries, Anita Garvin) LP 22951 Vagrant Ham keeps moving along to avoid arrest.

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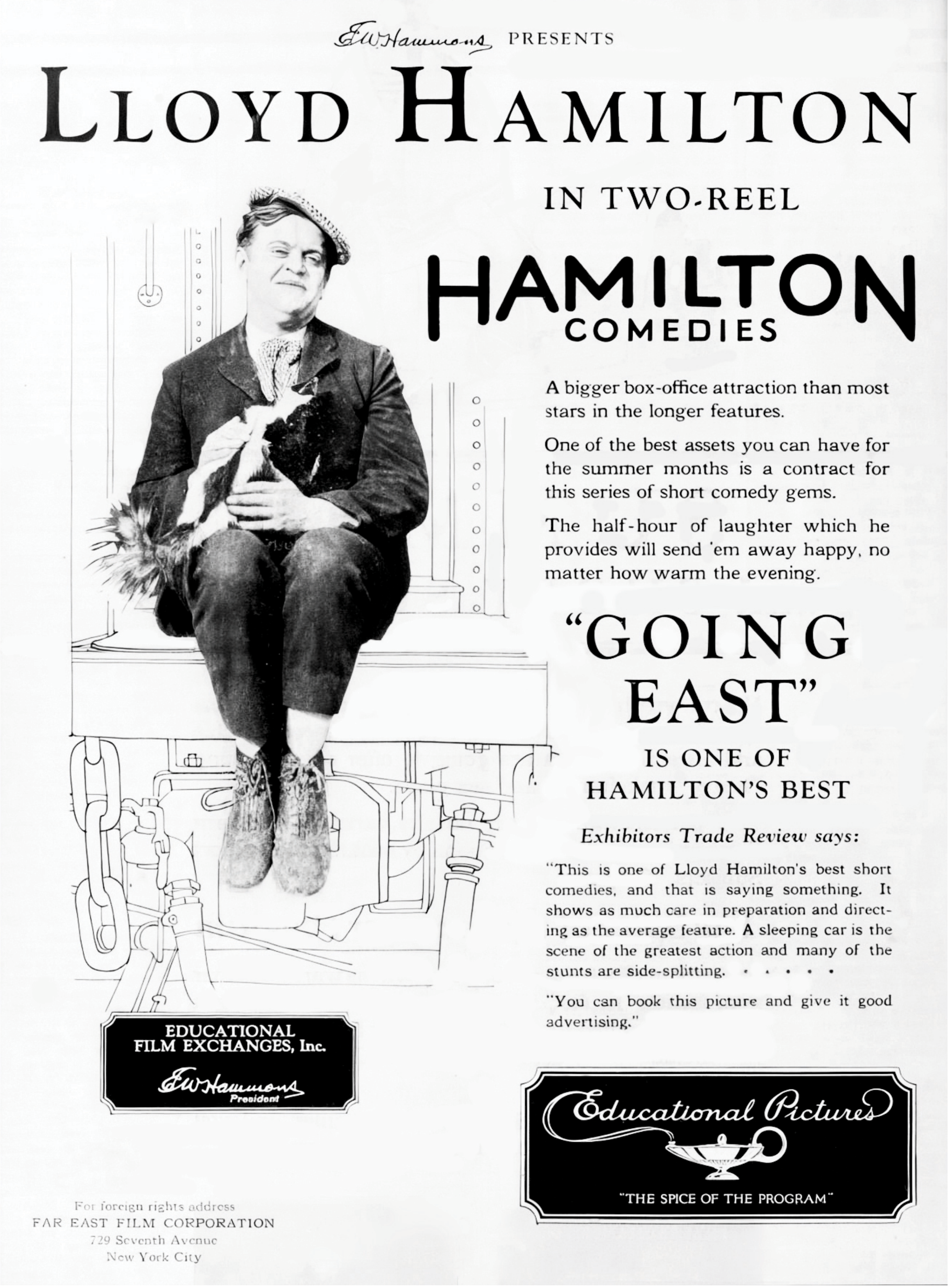
Here Comes Charlie (1926) Lloyd the Floorwalker has Blanche Payson under suspicion.



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8-29 *Jolly Tars* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; Grace Dalton, Dick Sutherland, Phil Dunham, Henry Murdoch) LP 23069 Ham gets on the wrong bus and finds himself enlisted in the navy. (BER DK)

10-17 *Teacher, Teacher* (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Bobby Burns, Aileen Lopez, Johnny Sinclair, Henry Murdoch) LP 23271 Ham battles unruly students at the night school where he teaches.

Lupino Lane Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

11-28 *Movieland* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Lupino Lane, Kathryn McGuire, Wallace Lupino, Glen Cavender, Tom O'Grady, cameo by LH) LP 23368 Wealthy "Nip" (Lane) tries to sneak into a movie studio to see his beloved.

Lloyd Hamilton Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

12-12 *One Sunday Morning* (d./w. William Goodrich; ph. William Nobles; c. Estelle Bradley, Stanley Blystone) LP 23441 Ham tries to take his family on a Sunday outing, but he can't start his new flivver.

1927:

1-30 *Peaceful Oscar* (d. William Goodrich; c. Blanche Payson; Billy Hampton, Toy Gallagher, Henry Murdoch, Chick Collins) LP 23612 Ham has a crush on his maid, but when his wife fires her, Ham must take her place.

3-13 *Somebody's Fault* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; ph. Leonard Smith; c. Estelle Bradley, Bob Kortman, Eva Thatcher, Al Thompson, Vincent Cullen) LP 23746 As an electrician's assistant, Ham is a threat to life and limb.

5-1 *Breezing Along* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Estelle Bradley, Robert Graves, Al Thompson, Eva Thatcher, Vincent Cullen,) (MOMA/FPA) LP 23910 Ham finds work as a butler though an employment office.

6-19 *Goose Flesh* (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Fred Spenser, Al Thompson, Estelle Bradley, Richard Carter, Henry Murdoch) LP 24074. A crook tries to scare detective Ham out of a haunted house.

7-31 *His Better Half* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Estelle Bradley, Glen Cavender, Al Thompson, Blanche Payson, Henry Murdoch) LP 24261 (CZECH) A failed search for a bride for Glen forces Ham to play the role himself.

9-4 *At Ease* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; ph. Leonard Smith; c. Stanley Blystone, Glen Cavender, Estelle Bradley, Al Thompson) (LC) LP 24397 Raw recruit Ham has trouble with the Army.

* *Note:* First reel is the only extant footage.

10-30 *New Wrinkles* (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Henry Murdoch, Al Thompson, Toy Gallagher, Phil Dunham, Elfie Fay, George Davis,Glen Cavender, Blanche Payson, Jack Lloyd) LP 24607 An epic struggle to replace Ham's lost hat.

12-18 *Papa's Boy* (a/k/a *Who's Kidding Who?*) * d./w. Norman Taurog; ph. Leonard Smith; c. Robert Graves, Glen Cavender, Betty Boyd, Al Thompson, Blanche Payson) LP 24800 Ham's obsession with butterfly collecting causes trouble.

Goodwill Studios:

Unreleased? *Life In Hollywood* * (1 rl; p. L.M. DeBell; c. Maurice Tourneur, Colleen Moore, Ben Lyon, Carmelita Geraghty, George Seigmann, Gaston Glass, Kenneth Harlan, Herbert Rawlinson, Grace Darmond, E.H. Allen, Ruth Hyatt, Al St. John) In this "cameos by the stars" short subject, Ham finds that he gets no respect around the studio until he removes his blackface makeup.

1928:

Lloyd Hamilton Comedies / Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

2-5 *Always A Gentleman* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Stanley Blystone, Edna Gregory, Al Thompson, Jack Miller) LP 25018 (CZECH) After a comic golf game, Ham finds himself in an insane asylum.

3-18 *Between Jobs* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Marjorie Moore, Al Thompson, Stanley Blystone, Jack Miller) LP 25078 To avoid arrest Ham must find work, so he gets a job as a carpenter.

4-22 *Blazing Away* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Kewpie Morgan, Lucille Hutton, Al Thompson) LP 25137 Ham and Kewpie are rival taxicab drivers, football captains, and suitors.

6-17 *A Home Made Man* * (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Lucille Hutton, Kewpie Morgan) LP 25323 Ham takes a job as a soda jerk and a physical fitness instructor in a tough gym.

7-22 *Listen Children* (d./w. Norman Taurog; c. Jack Miller, Al Thompson, Jackie Levine) LP 25462 Ham is beset by problems with his cars and with his charges at the military academy where he teaches.

Temporarily banned from screen by Hays office.

Van Beuren Corporation/Pathe:

10-24 *No Sale* (based on the comic strip "Smitty" by Walter Burns; p. James J. Tynan; d. George Marshall; c. Donald Haines, Jackie Combs, Maude Truax, Joseph Belmont) LP28753 The Smith family tries to sell their house. LH has a guest star role in this entry in the "Smitty" series, possibly as a prospective buyer.

All films from this point on are sound two-reelers unless otherwise indicated.

1929:

British & Dominion Films, Ltd./World Wide Pictures, Inc.:

4-14 *Black Waters* (8 rls; p. Herbert Wilcox; d. Marshall Neilan; w. John Willard; ph. David Kesson; c. James Kirkwood, Mary Brian, John Loder, Hallam Cooley, Frank Reicher, LH billed sixth as "Temple") LP 1828 Ham plays a stuttering valet in this seagoing thriller.

Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

5-5 *His Big Minute* * (p. Harry D. Edwards; d. William Watson; s. Gilbert Pratt; ph. Len Powers, Paul Perry; c. Gladys McConnell, Ivan Christy, Bert Woodruff, Glen

Cavender, Fred Peters) LP 374 Ham is a tenderfoot trying to woo the sister of two tough westerners. Gags from Buster Keaton's *Our Hospitality* (1923)

7-7 *Don't Be Nervous* * (p. Harry D. Edwards; d. William Watson; s. Gilbert Pratt; ph. Gus Peterson, William Wheeler; c. Rita LeRoy, Mahlon Hamilton) LP 649 In a dual role, Ham plays a milquetoast and a gangster.

8-18 *His Baby Daze* * (p. H. D. Edwards; Gilbert Pratt; s. George Bentley; ph. Leonard Flynn; c. Little Billy (Curtis), Eddie Barry, Glen Cavender, Martie Martell, Jimmie Hertz) LP 602 A millionaire's valet, Ham must act as guardian to a crooked midget posing as a child.

9-29 *Peaceful Alley* (p. H. D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; c. Douglas Scott, Adrienne Dore) LP 823 Ham befriends Pinky, a street waif who turns out to be rich.

11-10 *Toot Sweet* * (p. H. D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; st./dia. Vernon Smith; c. Lena Malena, Will Hays, Jackie Taylor's Orchestra) LP 916 Ham buys a new car to impress a girl who is in love with an Apache dancer.

RKO Distributing Corp.:

11-10 *Tanned Legs* * (7 rls; p. Louis Sarecky; d. Marshall Neilan; ad. Tom Geraghty; ph. Leo Tover, George Hull; c. June Clyde, Arthur Lake, Sally Blane, Allen Kearns, LH billed tenth as "detective") LP 922 In this early musical, "Tanned Legs" is a young girl who solves everyone's problems. LH not in prints currently in cable TV distribution.

Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.:

11-20 *The Show Of Shows* * (15 rls; p. Darryl F. Zanuck; d. John G. Adolfi; special material by Frank Fay, J. Keirn Brennan; ph. Bernard McGill; c. Frank Fay, all-star cast with LH as a "hansom cabby") LP 903 LH participates in two musical/comedy numbers in this all-star review.

Tiffany Productions:

12-3 *The Voice Of Hollywood #1* (1 rl; p. Louis Lewyn; c. Rudy Vallee, Marshall Neilan, Sally Blaine, Benny Rubin, Stepin Fetchit, Arthur Lake, Olive Borden, Robert Frazer. MP 1045 Ham hosts the first of this series which allowed audiences to hear Hollywood stars speak on film, often for the first time.

Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

12-22 *Grass Skirts* * (p. H. D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; s. Will King; c. Ruth Hiatt, Fred Peters, Beatrice Blinn, Will Hays) LP 1125 While in Waikiki, Ruth wants to marry seasick Ham with the goal of soon joining the "Merry Widow Club".

1930:

2-9 *Camera Shy* * (d. Gilbert Pratt; s. George Bentley; c. Ruth Hiatt, Harry Woods, Will Hays, Natalie Joyce) LP 1067 Ham disrupts a movie company on location with a far-fetched scenerio of his own. Reworked by W. C. Fields into *The Bank Dick* (1940) and *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* (1941) (?)

3-16 *Polished Ivory* * (p. H. D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; c. Tom Kennedy, Stella Adams, Billy Engle) LP 1302 Ham destroys a piano that he is hired to deliver.

4-27 *Follow The Swallow* * (d. Alf Goulding; s. Vernon Smith) c. Ruth Hiatt, Billy Barty, Will Hays) LP 1264 A day at the beach and a mischievious 2-year-old lead to trouble.

5-25 *Good Morning Sheriff* * (p. H. D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; s. Robert Stewart; ad/dia. Jack Preston; c. John C. Fowler, Ruth Hiatt, Eddie Baker, Lige Conley) LP 1320 Sheriff Ham captures Black Jack, a notorious outlaw.

6-29 *Honk Your Horn* * (d./st. Alf Goulding; c. Lige Conley, Alyce McCormick, Eddie Baker) LP 1471 Flea circus proprietor Ham tries to drum up business for Lige's garage.

Richfield Oil/Electrical Research Products Inc.:

July *Service Wins Again* (c. Eddie Baker) Advertised as the "first industrial talking picture comedy". Shot at Metropolitan Sound Studios.

Service Wins Again (1930) Lloyd Hamilton did this industrial short for Atlantic Richfield, featuring Neal Burns and Eddie Baker.

Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

8-3 *Prize Puppies* * (p. Harry D. Edwards; d. Alf Goulding; s. Robert Stewart; ph. Leonard Flynn, Jack Breamer; c. Will Hays, Harry Fenwick, Stella Adams) LP 1492 Ham judges a dog show.

10-5 *Won By A Neck* * (d. William Goodrich; s. Tom Whitely; cnt/dia. Harry McCoy, Walter DeLeon; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Ruth Hiatt, Addie McPhail) LP 2022/LP 2056 Rookie detective Ham tries to capture "One Shot Louie".

11-30 *Up A Tree* (d. William Goodrich; cnt/dia. Harry McCoy, Jimmy Starr; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Dell Henderson, Addie McPhail) LP 1859 Henpecked Ham wins notoriety as a long-endurance tree-sitter.

Fox Film Corporation:

11-30 *Are You There?* * (6 rls; d. Hamilton MacFadden; s/dia. Harlan Thompson; ph. Joseph Valentine; c. Beatrice Lillie, John Garrick, Olga Baclanova, George Grossmith,

BEAR CAT
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Y-B

Polished Ivory (1930)

Roger Davis, Jillian Sand, Gustav von Seyffertitz, and LH billed eleventh as a "hostler") LP 1701 Lillie plays a detective in this musical comedy mystery.

c. 1930/31 (?):

Tiffany Productions:

?-? *The Voice Of Hollywood* # ? * (1 rl; p. Louis Lewyn; c. Walter Hiers, Carlotta King, Dorothy Burgess, Leatrice Joy, Ruth Hiatt) Ham hosts in his second appearance in this short revue series.

1931:

Lloyd Hamilton Talking Comedies/Educational Film Exchanges, Inc.:

1-18 *Marriage Rows* (d./s. William Goodrich; cnt/ad. Walter Reed; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Al St. John, Addie McPhail, Doris Deane, Edna Marion) LP 2106 Ham's wife stages an affair with another man to cure him of jealousy.

3-8 *Ex-Plumber* * (d./w. William Goodrich; cnt/ad. Walter Reed; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Addie McPhail, Stanley Blystone, Mitchell Lewis, Amber Norman, Polly Christie) LP 2152 Plumber Ham feigns marriage to a rich client.

Lloyd Hamilton Comedies/Universal Pictures Corp.:

4-22 *No Privacy* (d. Harry Edwards; s. Francis J. Martin, James Mulhauser; cnt. Henry R. Symonds) LP 2120 Ham, though a pauper, tries to woo a banker's daughter.

6-3 *Hello Napoleon* * (Red Star; d. Harry J. Edwards; s. Francis J. Martin, James Mulhauser) LP 2225 Ham is victimized by a lunatic posing as a doctor after checking into an asylum for a bee sting. Situation from *Always a Gentleman* (1928).

7-22 *Howdy Mate* (Red Star; d. Harry J. Edwards; s. Johnnie Grey, Sidney Levee, Mitchell Rhein) LP 2314 While aboard a cargo vessel, Ham runs afoul of the captain and his mate.

9-30 *An Apple a Day* (Red Star; d. Harry J. Edwards; s. Francis J. Martin, James Mulhauser) LP 2470 Apple-seller Ham infuriates a jealous husband.

1932:

2-24 *Robinson Crusoe And Son* * (d. Harry J. Edwards; st. Francis J. Martin, Sidney Levee) LP 2816 (LC) In this remake of *Robinson Crusoe, Ltd.* (1921), Ham relates his adventures on a desert isle to his son.

* *Note:* Each reel of this film exists in different collections, but neither has a soundtrack.

Mack Sennett Comedies/Paramount Pictures, Inc.:

11-4 *False Impressions* * (p. Mack Sennett; d. Leslie Pearce; c. Marjorie Beebe, Edmund Burns, Dorothy Granger, Marvin Loback, William McCall, Bud Jamison) LP 3407 Ham crashes a fancy ball after Marjorie gets a job as a maid.

12-16 *Doubling In the Quickies* * (working title: *A Hollywood Double*; p. Mack Sennett; d. Babe Stafford; c. Marjorie Beebe, Aggie Herring, Ted Strobach, Bud Jamison) LP 3485 Ham follows Marjorie to Hollywood where she is working as a stuntwoman.

12-23 *The Lion And the House* * (p. Mack Sennett; d. Babe Stafford; c. Arthur Stone, Babe Kane, Aggie Herring) LP 3515 A lion parachutes into Ham's newly redecorated house.

1933:

2-10 *Too Many Highballs* * (p. Mack Sennett; d. Clyde Bruckman; c. Marjorie Beebe, Tom Dugan, Aggie Herring, Bud Jamison, Joe Bordeaux) LP 3642 Ham is arrested for drunk driving and "poisoning" his brother-in-law.

Paramount Pictures, Inc.:

9-8? *Hollywood On Parade B-5?* * (1 rl; p. Louis Lewyn; c. Buster Crabbe, Mae West, Cecil B. deMille, Groucho, Chico, and Zeppo Marx) MP 4445 Ham hosts this compendium of newsreel clips of famous stars.

Mermaid Comedies/Educational Productions, Inc.:

12-29 *Pop's Pal* * (d. Harry J. Edwards; st/dia. Ernest Pagano Ewart Adamson, C. Edward Roberts; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Billy Bevan, George Bickel, John Harron, Josephine Hull) LP 4350 Ham wants to hire John Harron, but he is terrorized by the boy's father and father-in-law.

1934:

Educational Productions, Inc.:

1-12 *An Old Gypsy Custom* * (d. Harry J. Edwards; s/dia. Ernest Pagano, Ewart Adamson, C. Edward Roberts, N. T. Barrows; ph. Dwight Warren; c. Andy Clyde, John Cheenan, Addie MacPhail, Cecilia Parker, Fern Emmett, Spec O'Donnell, Betty Boyd, Chiquita de Montes) LP 4395 Andy Clyde gets involved with gypsies. Ham is a gun-toting sheriff on the lookout for pig thieves.

Cavalcade Film Corporation:

Wedding Belles * (2 rls?; d. Sam Newfield; ph. Otto Him; sound. Hans Weeren, Sonophone Sound System; c. Jack del Rio, Eddie Gribbon, Arthur Houseman, Gertrude Astor) (MOMA) Ham stows away on a ship to be near his beloved. Some gags reworked from *Move Along* (1926).

Colortone Musicals/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp.:

12-1 *Star Night at the Coconut Grove* * (2-tone techicolor; p. Louis Lewyn; c. Leo Carillo, El Brendel, Mary Pickford, Bing Crosby, Gary Cooper, Arlene Judge, Toby Wing, Raquel Torres, Johnny Mack Brown) LP 5303 Wobbly cameo as an island chieftain dancing the hula.

Hamilton Addenda:

1915:

Kalem Company, Inc./General Film Company:

"Ham and Bud's" Curtain Call This was one of a series of trailers produced by Kalem to promote their two comedy stars.

1919:

Mack Sennett Productions/Paramount Pictures, Inc.:

6-22 *No Mother To Guide Him* (2 rls.; p. Mack Sennett; d. Mal St. Clair, Erle Kenton; c. Ben Turpin, Heinie Conklin, Myrtle Lind, Joseph Belmont, Charles Lynn) Mack Sennett had the scenerio for this picture written for Hamilton, under the working title, *The Lesson Story* at a time he was trying to sign Hamilton away from Henry Lehrman. Hamilton followed Lehrman to First National, and Sennett produced the picture with Ben Turpin. LP 13799

1926:

Unidentified Newsreel Footage: * Hamilton is seen arriving at the grand opening of Grauman's Chinese Theater with his wife(?). Banned "Fatty" Arbuckle also appears. Footage included in Blackhawk Films' compilation, *Memories of Silent Stars, Part 2*.

Late 1926/Early 1927:

Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer:

Rose Marie (d. William Nigh; c. Renee Adorée, Ralph Forbes, Creighton Hale, Harry Carey, George Cooper) After spending $242,000 filming a silent version of the Rudolf Friml operetta, the film is scrapped (largely due to problems with Miss Adorée), and completely reshot by producer/director Lucien Hubbard with Joan Crawford, James (*The Crowd*) Murray, House Peters and George Cooper in Hamilton's role ("Fuzzy"). Stills exist of Hamilton in the role.

"HAM"

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Unconfirmed Kalem Title:

Ham At It Again (Probably British release title of a U.S. film.)

Fox/Sunshine releases for which no male cast members have been identified, thus possible Hamilton credits:

A Husband's Wife (3-3-18; d. David Kirkland) No Copyright

A Lady Bellhop's Secret (5-4-19) LP 13691

Dabbling In Society (6-15-19; d. Reggie Morris) LP 14175 * One of the character names is Sir Claude Plumpington (Ham?)

The Roaming Bathtub (12-12-19; d. Frank C. Griffin) LP 14578

Unconfirmed Universal/Star Comedy:

8-15-21 *The (A) Misfit Pair* (1 rl) Karel Caslavsky lists this in his database of filmographies as a Hamilton film, and indeed, in the copyright deposit the two lead actors are referred to as "Charles" and "Lloyd". There is even a typical Hamilton gag in the synopsis (a live fish falls into Lloyd's pants). The mystery surrounding this film is the question of why would Hamilton make this at a time he was contractually bound and had a financial interest in Mermaid Comedies? Why would he co-star in a one-reeler for Universal's least prestigious comedy unit at a time he had his own series? Why is he referred to as Lloyd when he was commonly known as "Ham" on-sceen and off? A possible solution is that Hamilton could have made the film in his "inactive" year of 1919 and it was not released until 1921.

***TOTAL*: 252 Titles**

28	Frontier silent one-reelers
117	Kalem silent one-reelers
9	Fox/Sunshine silent two-reelers
2	First National silents
55	Educational silent two-reelers
17	Educational talkie two-reelers
5	Universal talkie two-reelers
4	Mack Sennett/Paramount talkie two-reelers
8	feature film appearances
7	miscellaneous appearances

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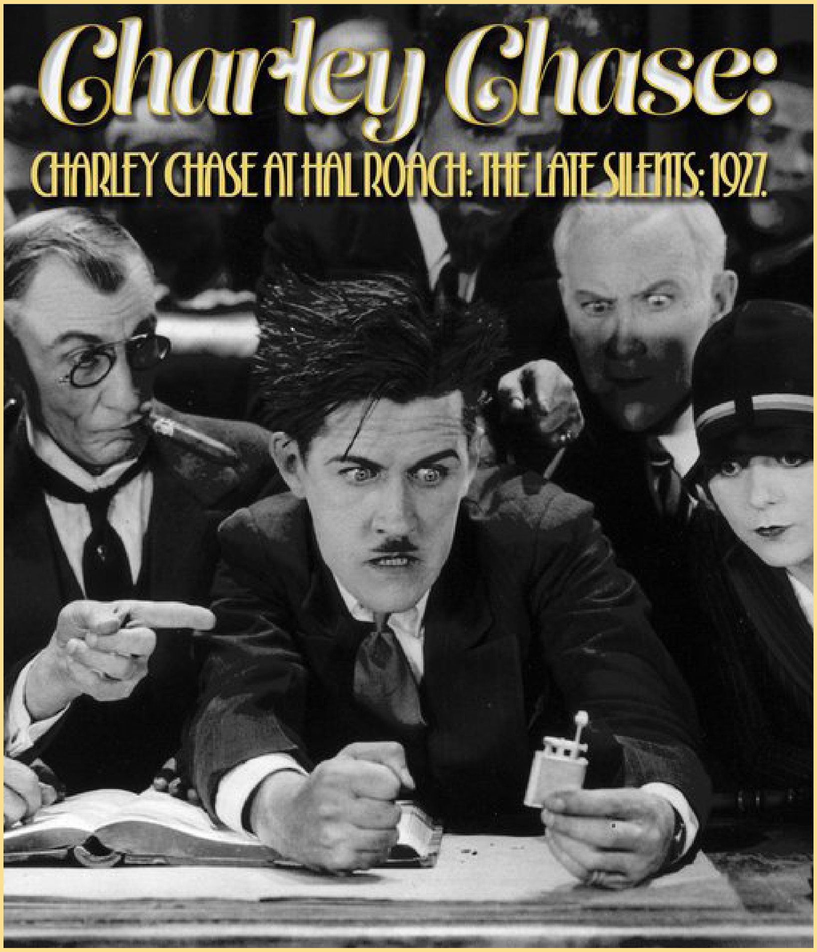


It's no secret that Charley Chase was one of the greatest (and funniest) comedians of silent movies. At his height in the 1920s, he turned out dozens of two-reel comedy gems one after another. Today his films are enjoyed and revered by a huge fanbase — and yet his Hal Roach silents from 1927 — his busiest and perhaps best year —remained unseen for over 90 years... that is, until now!

Charley Chase At Hal Roach: The Late Silents: 1927 is a fabulous collection of 15 rare Chase shorts, beautifully restored from the best surviving elements culled from film archives and private collectors around the world. I thought I knew Chase's work, but most of the films here were new and exciting experiences. Best of all, every short is laugh-out-loud funny, filled with hilarious sight gags and the type of humor you expect from Hal Roach comedies. Roach regulars are on hand, including Laurel & Hardy costars Anita Garvin, Charlie Hall, Tiny Sandford, Noah Young — as well as Stan and Ollie themselves, supporting Charley before they became a team.

Without a doubt, this is one of the most remarkable collections of a major silent film comedian ever released on Blu-ray. Each film features a wonderful score by composer Dr. Andrew Earle Simpson and a fun & highly informative commentary track by noted film historian, author, and Hal Roach raconteur Richard M. Roberts. Richard recounts the years of painstaking research to track down prints of these films. Incredibly, the Roach studio carelessly allowed many of their silents to decompose rather than properly preserve them. This is the first-ever restoration of these Charley Chase classics and is essential viewing for Chase fans, comedy fans, and all lovers of classic film.

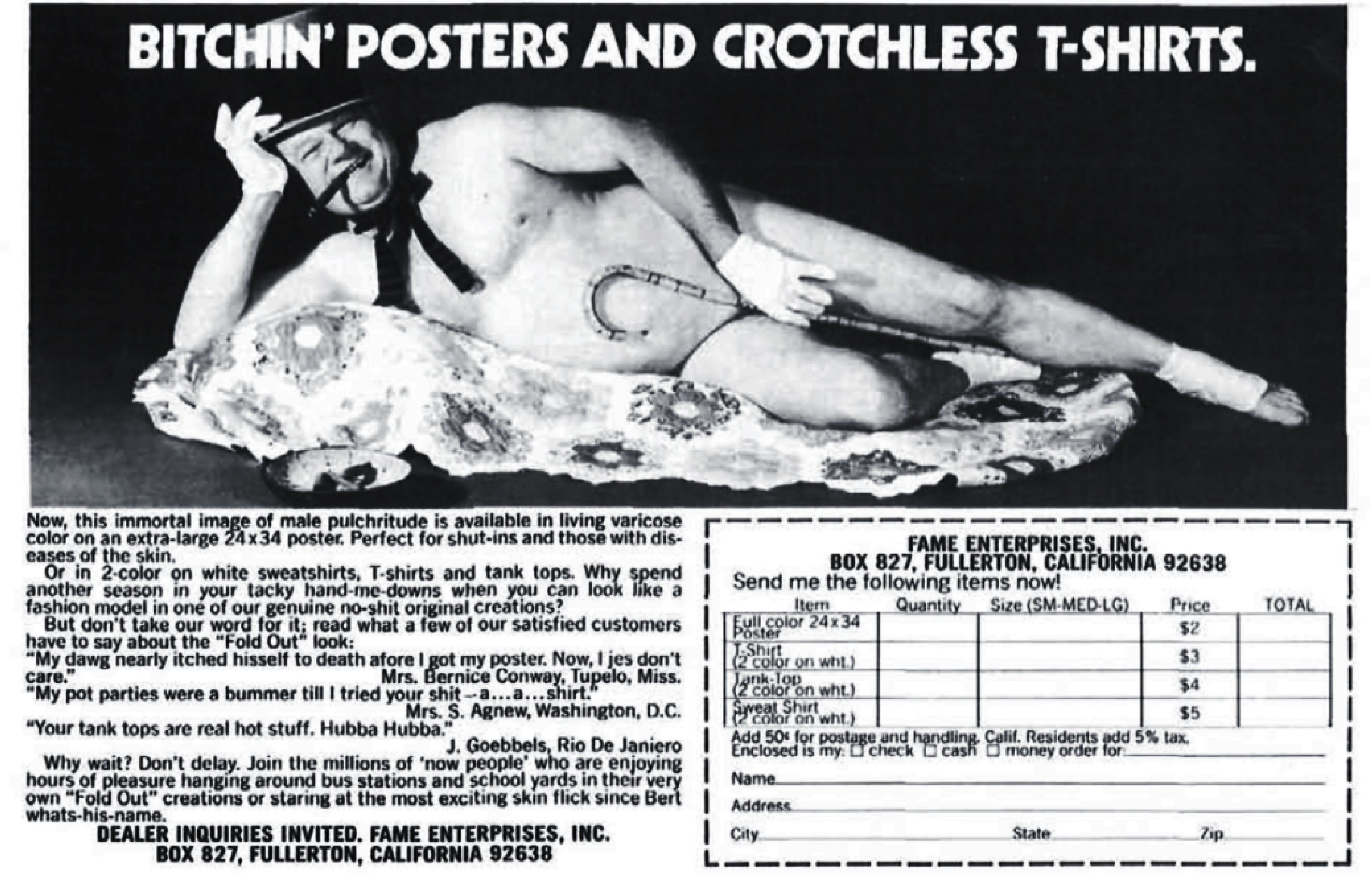
The amazing digital restorations were crafted by Paul E. Gierucki and his team at CineMuseum LLC, and David B. Pearson designed the restored title cards. Richard M. Roberts and Kit Parker produced the set, released by The Sprocket Vault. It's region-free so it will play anywhere in the world. I bought it for myself, but also ordered it as Christmas presents for friends - a perfect holiday gift for that movie buff in your life!

— Historian Edward Watz

The Comique Cutie

This issue's Comique Cutie centerfold is a bizarre spoof of the April 1972 Burt Reynolds nude photoshoot for Cosmopolitan magazine — featuring a WC Fields lookalike recreating Burt's iconic pose.

Issued by Great Western Distributors, Inc, this unusual offering was copyrighted 1972 by Fame Enterprises, Inc., of Fullerton, California. Little is known about the creation of this parody, even less about the individual impersonating The Great Man. However, a half-page sales ad survives in the November 1972 issue of National Lampoon magazine:



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Ah yesss . . .

POLLY MORAN

A Bassoon in “Hollywood’s Symphony of Sweet-Tuned Violins”

by Joanna E. Rapf

A story in *Picture-Play Magazine* (January 1929) compares both Louise Fazenda and Polly Moran to “bassoons,” the “low” sounds in a symphony. Fazenda has been called “Moran’s only rival in the field of film burlesque,” but unlike Moran, Fazenda was regarded as a “quiet and intellectual young woman,” while Moran was anything but. She once described herself as “a very low comedienne,” compared to her good friend, William (“Billy”) Haines, who was just a “low” comedian (Gebhart 52). She could be rough, unruly, and loud. Delight Evans in *Photoplay* called her “the spirit of slapstick” (51). Steve Massa observes that both on stage and on screen, “her emotions are large and volcanic and seem to erupt out of her,” and that “the hallmark of her character was a complete lack of class” (97). I would also add that her comic technique was primarily parody, done without hostility and instead, with a friendly affection for her subjects.

She developed this persona early on. Her parents were stage performers, and she seems to have joined them by the age of eight, going on to have a career in burlesque and vaudeville as she grew up. In 1915, at the age of 30, she was recruited for Mack Sennett’s Keystone Company. Initially, she was paired with Charlie Murray in films parodying an Irish working-class couple, battling with each other, and caught up in various shenanigans, but she soon became a fixture on the Keystone lot as an “all-purpose-eccentric.” Her career took off in 1917 when she had her own series of shorts as “Sheriff Nell,” often co-starring with cross-eyed Ben Turpin. Evans has written:

“I don’t know whether Polly or Mack Sennett thought of Sheriff Nell first, but I feel sure that Polly had a lot to do with it. The blustering eccentric Nell, who went through the wildest series of adventures ever recorded by a comedy camera, brought fame to her creator and added to Sennett’s luster” (51).

However, Moran left Sennett in 1919 to make films for Fox Sunshine Comedies, and then in 1920 to star in her own series of two-reelers as part of “Carnival Comedies” for the states’ rights market, produced by Marion S. Kohn. Then, between 1923 and 1925 Moran seems to have left film, focusing on her vaudeville career. Evans’ 1923 article in *Photoplay* describes some of her routines:

“I watched her in vaudeville the other day. She wears a wig that everyone knows is a wig. She strides on stage and sings a terrible song called, ‘I’m Polly With a Fractured Past.’ And then proceeds to kid her audience, her pictures, the film industry in general, and herself in particular.”

Moran was obviously a verbal as well as a physical comedienne and parody, as mentioned above, was at the heart of her routines, both on stage and on screen. People said she was funnier in person than under the restrictions of a script and the repeated “takes” involved in making movies. In interviews she talked of her fondness for working in front of a live audience and the freedom that the stage allowed for improvisation. But as talking pictures loomed on the horizon, she was signed by MGM in 1925 to appear as a zany supporting character, a role she fulfilled in many of that studio's films during the 1930s. She was particularly excited by the coming of sound and once said, "You know, these talking pictures are going to be a great break for people like me. We know how to use our voices" (Walker 50). In fact, her obituary in the *New York Herald Tribune* (January 26, 1952) noted that she was "one of the few comediennes able to bridge the gap between silent films and the talkies."

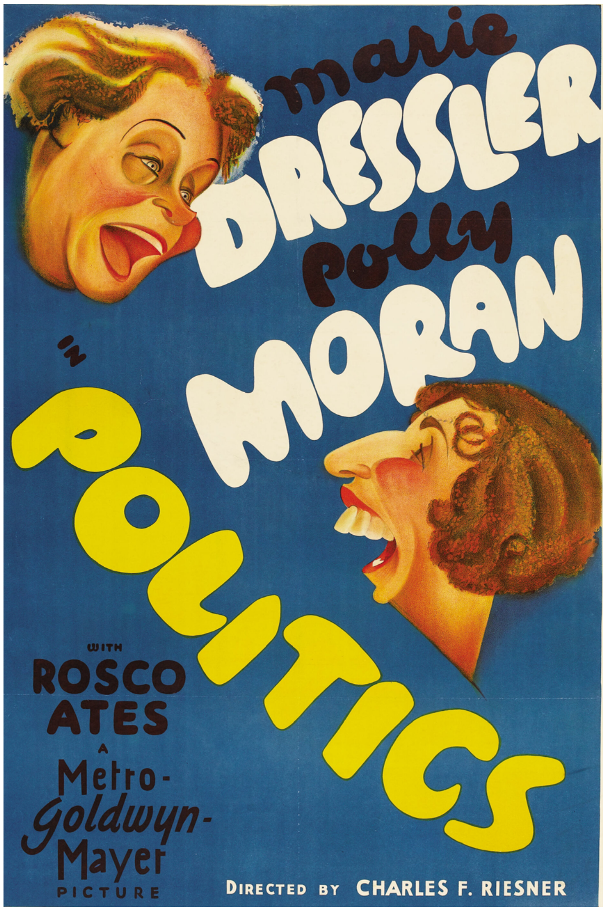
She credits Tod Browning for her first role at MGM, an uncredited appearance as a flower lady at a music hall in his silent film, *The Blackbird* (1926), starring Lon Chaney. A story in Exhibitors Herald (November 21, 1925), announces that "Sheriff Nell" Moran is "back from vaudeville." She is remembered for her "burlesques on such Western heroes as Tom Mix and for her work with the old Keystone group opposite Charlie Murray." In Browning's film she plays "a comely London slattern of the Limehouse district" (37). This was followed by four more uncredited appearances before what she hoped would be her big break, co-starring with Marie Dressler in *The Callahans and the Murphys* (1927). The film, based on a novel by Kathleen Norris, was the idea of screenwriter Frances Marion to revive the career of Marie Dressler. But according to Moran, Marion was also responsible for her casting. "Then Frances Marion — God love her! — saw me in the commissary at M-G-M having lunch with somebody. She walked right out of there and up to the front office and said, 'Polly Moran is going to play in *The Callahans and the Murphys*.' And I did!" (Walker 50). Unfortunately, the film was pulled from release due to objections by Irish and Catholic groups, and today, only ten minutes of it survive at the Library of Congress.

But Moran and Dressler apparently clicked as feisty older Irish drinking partners in the banished film, and today Moran's best-known sound films are those she did with Dressler between 1929-1932. Kristine Karnick, who has written well on their pairing in "Community of Unruly Women," talks about how their films challenged cultural assumptions about gender and femininity and lay the groundwork for significant social agency by older women. Karnick makes the important point that they "emerged at a time when aging women were becoming somewhat fashionable," citing Walter Pitkin's best-selling *Life Begins at Forty*, that appeared in 1932 (89). The Dressler/ Moran comedies "affirmed the power and authority of older women," and appealed to audiences "who sought refuge in these women's age and

Moran with Lon Chaney in *London After Midnight* (1927)

Moran with Greta Garbo in *The Divine Woman* (1928)

Moran with Marie Dressler in *Caught Short* (1930)



Moran and Dressler with Anita Page in *Reducing* (1931)

experience during a period of economic crisis" (95). Dressler probably embodied this phenomenon more than Moran, however, whose roles in the films she did not do with Dressler tended to parody unsympathetic older women, and often maids. In fact, Dressler once said, after admitting she had considerable respect for Moran as a comedienne, that she believed, "each of us plays better without the other" (Kennedy 162).

Moran's first role in a talking film was small in *The Unholy Night* (d. Lionel Barrymore 1929), but she came into her own as a verbal as well as physical comedienne in a short with future "team-mate," Marie Dressler, *Dangerous Females* (d. William Watson 1929). She was 46. Compared to younger women, who must often maintain an air of femininity, older women, the ones Mary Daly describes as "hags and harpies," are free "to roar," and Moran does just that (Daly 17).

In an undated clipping from *The Morning Telegraph* entitled "Maturity: Polly Tells Why Middle Age Fits Comedy Roles," she said:

"Youth is vain of its looks and its dignity, despite all this stuff about 'flapper pranks.' But when people grow old they learn to forget how they look to do the things which make the public laugh. . . . Real comedy requires knowledge of the psychology of life. You have to have had sufficient experience to know how human beings really act."

The value of being an older comedienne, according to Moran, is that it "doesn't matter whether you are fat or thin. You look funny either way." She was glad she did not to have "to worry about shape or wrinkles," and she recognized that the struggles of living teach "the value of simplicity and kindness and friendship" (Walker 50). Writing about her friend, Marie Dressler said, "We believe there is no such thing as age or poverty, for one is old and broke only when health is gone. One may be old at sixteen or young at eight. That's our philosophy" (Dressler 63, 111).

The friendship between Dressler and Moran and their comic play with each other is beautifully illustrated in *Chasing Rainbows* (d. Charles Reisner, February 1930). They are members of a travelling roadshow, Dressler a performer and Moran the wardrobe mistress. Towards the end, stage manager Jack Benny makes a speech and Dressler and Moran come on stage to praise him for it. However, they get distracted in an altercation as to whether or not Polly will ever marry and they start fighting. Benny, who describes them as a couple of "wildcats," urges them to make up. Their body language is characteristic, with Dressler (who plays a character named Bonnie) fiddling with her necklace, calling attention to herself in the scene, while Polly stands meekly, head lowered. But it's all a ruse for Benny, for when he exits, they look at each other slyly, laugh, hug, and go off to Dressler's dressing room to get drunk.

A riotous slapstick number in which they are both drunk follows. Still, Polly is the passive one, sitting vacantly with a hot water bottle on her head, while Dressler thrashes around trying to open another bottle of liquor. After a rather sentimental speech in which she tells Polly that she will never forget how kind she was to her, and that they must stop fighting against each other and instead, fight for each other "through fire and water," she predictably pulls a sink off the wall and the two of them, in familiar slapstick fashion, are drenched.

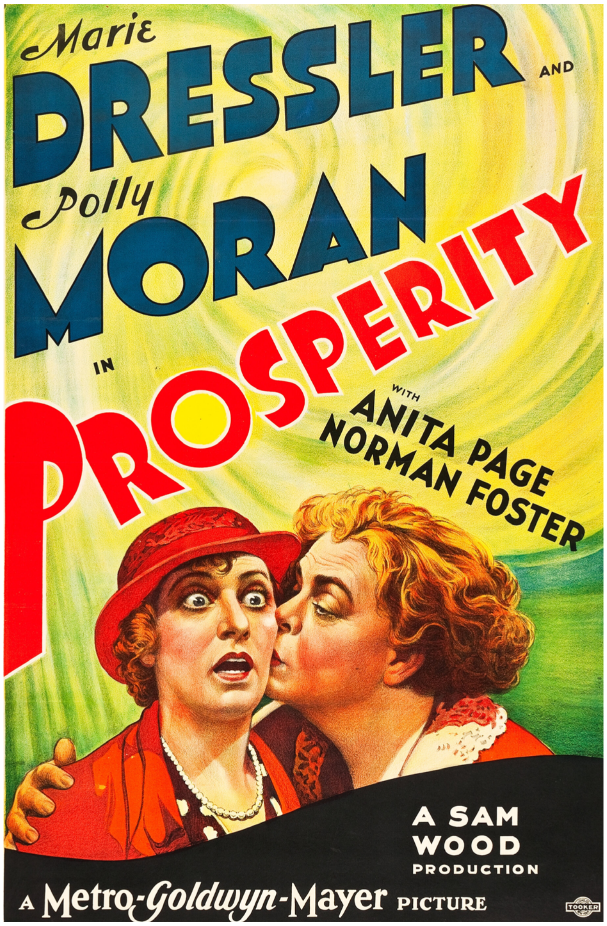
Moran seemed to accept Dressler's scene-stealing with equanimity. She once said, "That rubber face of hers makes me look like Dead-Pan Keaton when I'm in a close-up with her. All she has to do is make the slightest grimace and everyone else in the scene fades right out of the picture" (quoted in Sturtevant 47).

Moran's solo work, in fact, includes one role with Buster Keaton in *The Passionate Plumber* (d. Edward Sedgwick 1932), in which she plays a maid, Albine, who is involved with Keaton's friend, played by Jimmy Durante. This film is really a vehicle for the two male stars, although Moran has some snappy dialogue with the both of them.

She is a livelier maid in *The Girl Said No* (d. Sam Wood 1930), released one month after *Chasing Rainbows*, in which she got to play with her good friend, William (Billy) Haines. Fan magazines of the time played up their friendship. For example, *Talking Screen* for Sept./Oct. 1930 featured a story entitled, "POLLY MORAN CHEERS HER PAL, BILLY HAINES," in which we read "Polly Moran and Bill Haines constitute the greatest friendship of any two wise-crackers in Hollywood" (20). Dressler also appears in this one, but on her own, with no scenes with Moran. She plays Hattie Brown, an elderly lady whom Haines, posing as a doctor, tries to get to sign for some phony bonds. Moran's role, as usual, is more subdued than Dressler's as a feisty maid in the Haines household, however, she manages some slapstick falls and gives the no-good Haines a well-deserved slap.

Haines and Moran followed this one with *Remote Control* (d. Nick Grinde, Edward Sedgwick, Malcolm St. Clair) in November of the same year. In this comedy crime caper, Moran does not have much of a role, but she shines in her brief cameo as a parody (her forte) of a beauty expert auditioning for Haines for a part in a radio show. Wearing an unbecoming hat and a pair of glasses, she remarks that she has not looked in the mirror since her facelift because they are not high enough.

Moran with Jimmy Durante and Buster Keaton in the most depressing photograph ever taken.



But the radio theme here is worth mentioning because its emphasis on voices was now a factor in picture making. As mentioned above, Moran, with her stage training, knew how to use her voice and welcomed the opportunity. It is especially notable in *Alice in Wonderland* (d. Norman McLeod, 1932) where we don't see her at all. Hers is the voice of the DoDo bird, drying a damp Alice with the "driest thing" she knows, a long, tedious recitation of history.

Moran's last film with Dressler, who died in July of 1934, was *Prosperity* in 1932. MGM tried to find her another co-star, but without success. A project with May Robson entitled *Comin' Round* the Mountain, was announced and extensively promoted, but it was never released, although a Gene Autry vehicle with the same title appeared in 1936 from Republic Pictures.

What is of particular interest to me personally is that my grandfather, Harry Rapf, is listed as Associate Producer for this "New Comedy Team." He had been a close friend of Dressler's and produced a number of her films, so I am glad to see that he continued to look for ways of using Moran. Robson had received an Oscar nomination in 1933 for the role of Apple Annie in *Lady for a Day* (d. Frank Capra), but she is best known today as Mrs. Wendel in *Dinner at Eight* (1933) and Aunt Elizabeth in *Bringing Up Baby* (1938). It would have been a fascinating pairing, and although it never came to pass, Robson did appear with Moran in *Alice in Wonderland* as the voice of the Queen of Hearts. And my grandfather went on to produced *Hollywood Party* (1934), a mish-mash of a film centered around Jimmy Durante as an actor who plays Schnarzan, a parody of Tarzan, who needs a better lion to fight in his jungle pictures.

Sailor Maid (1937)

In *What Made Pistachio Nuts*, Henry Jenkins goes through the production history of this film in detail, seeing its unresolved and discontinuous narrative as a prime example of the problem of integrating the non-narrative aesthetic of vaudeville comedy into the narrative tradition of the classical cinema (107-127). My grandfather wanted more structure, moving from the simple revue format he had used in *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, that also includes a funny back and forth by Dressler and Moran. For a year and a half, the production team struggled to create some coherence, finally resolving the problem by having it all take place in a dream. It's not very satisfactory, but without its nonsensical plot, the film contains a fascinating mélange of talent, from the Three Stooges, Laurel & Hardy, Mickey Mouse, and even an animated sequence in color from Disney. Moran plays Henrietta Clemp, the "Oil Queen," married to Harvey Clemp (Charles Butterworth) the "Oil King" from Oklahoma. She is once again a parody, this time of a rich, dignified lady who succumbs to being wooed first by a rival movie star to Schnarzan, Liondora (George Givot), who disguises himself as a foreign Duke aptly named Nickel-Louse, and then by Schnarzan himself. Nickel-Louse gives Moran a good chance to parody Hollywood seduction scenes by rolling around a divan, fighting off something very close to a rape while her bemused husband watches from behind a trellis. With Schnarzan (Durante), she drinks and sings, "I've had my moments," trying to impress him for a possible role in the movies. "Will my personality & figure appeal to the public?" she asks, parodying her own age and body image with the idea that she might one day be "America's sweetheart."

Moran retired from the screen and stage in 1940 and lived a busy life in Laguna Beach where she even ran for City Council on a "Pro Dog" ticket. She was well liked, and, as mentioned above, more of a wit off-screen than on. An obituary in the *New York Times* (January r26, 1952), commented that "her fast wisecracks were notably free of hurt to others, though she didn't spare herself." This was true on-screen also. Dressler could be hurtful, but Moran just took it, while regularly engaging in self-parody as she did in Hollywood Party. One of her last screen appearances was in the Hepburn/Tracy classic, *Adam's Rib* (d. Cukor 1949). It's brief. Lawyer Hepburn interviews her on the witness stand about having been a foreman for 17 months, a job she received because of seniority. When she asks if her husband is employed, Moran meekly replies, "Yes, under me." It's a double entendre, it gets a laugh from the courtroom, but unforgettable is Moran's little smile as she knowingly utters the line.

She claims that she "worked in the picture two days before I got a real look at myself. After that I never went back" (quoted in the NY Times obituary). As an older performer, she didn't like her appearance, comparing it to "an old-beaded bag," but she was never vain, and she played on her unconventional looks.

Charlie Chaplin once said that as a man grows older, he gains a certain dignity and that is fatal to a comic. Perhaps it was fatal to Chaplin, but it certainly wasn't to Polly Moran. Dignity was never her "thing." Her "bassoon" or low comedy made fun of social conventions, high art, low art, romance, and age, including herself. As she got older, like her friend, Marie Dressler, she came to believe that the years after forty or fifty can be "the richest, the most fruitful and satisfying in one's life, particularly in a woman's life" (Dressler 266). But the hallmark of her parody is that it was never bitter or hurtful. It was fun, from Sheriff Nell, to the DoDo bird, to a factory foreman on the witness stand affirming, with a smile, a woman's right to power.

FOOTNOTES

1. Evans, Delight. "She Knocks 'Em Dead." 23.2 *Photoplay* (January 1923): 51.

2. From the Polly Moran clipping film, Billy Rose Performing Arts Library, Lincoln Center, New York. It is undated but is probably from 1930 since the Dressler/Moran film of that year *Caught Short*, is mentioned in the story.

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POLLY MORAN-Metro Goldwyn-Mayer
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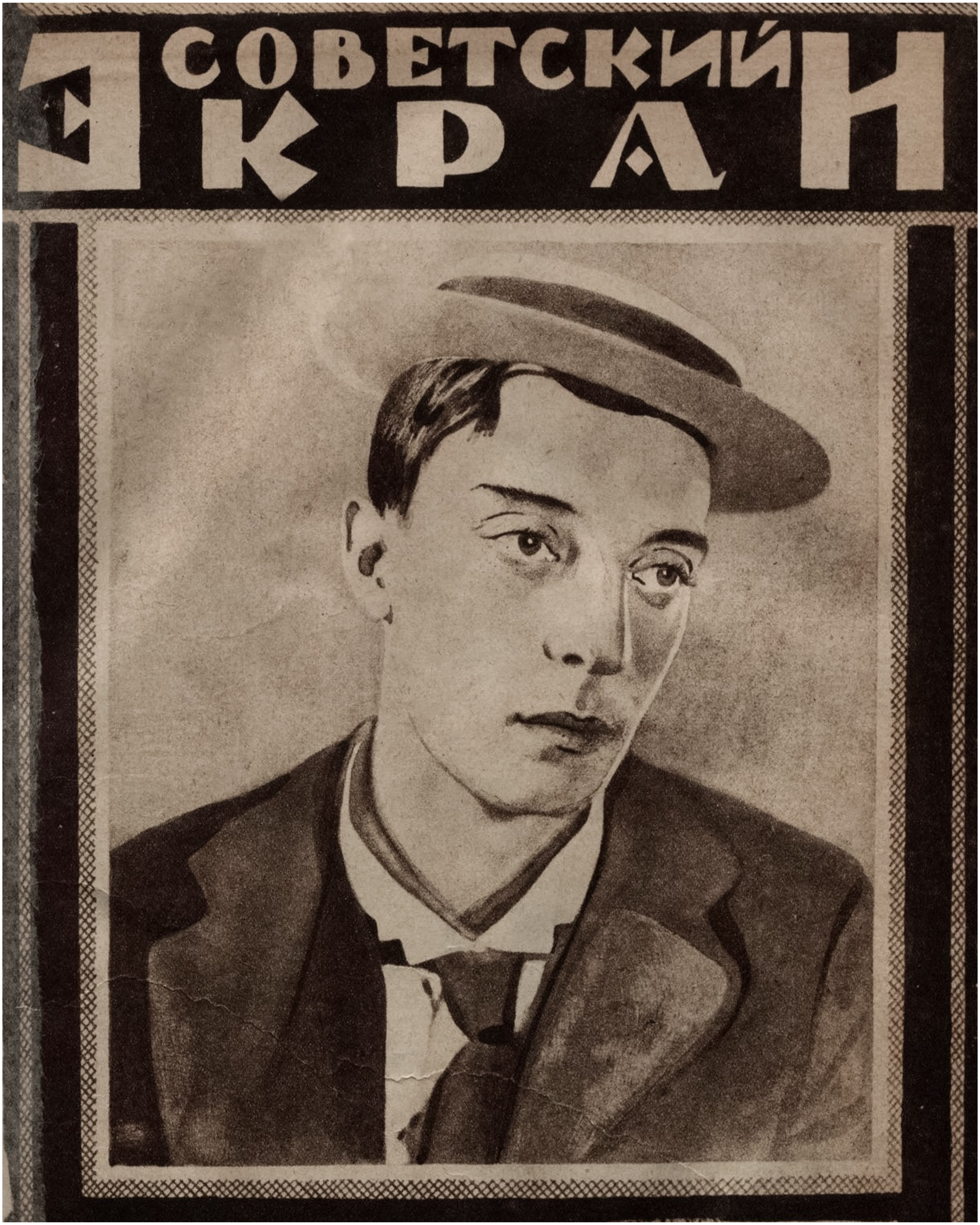
БАСТЕР
КИТОН
В СССР

(Buster Keaton in the USSR)

by Olga Egorova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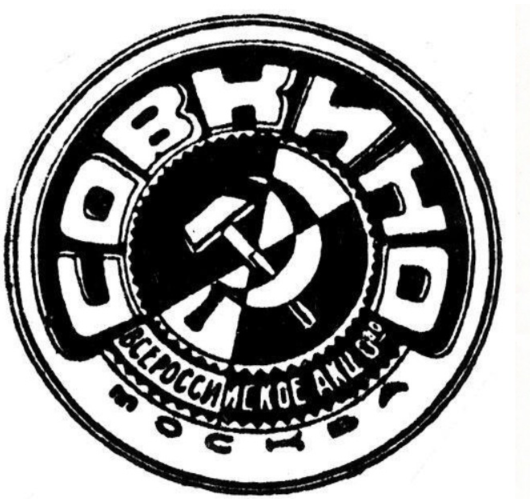
Buster on the cover of
Soviet Screen Magazine, 1926



Sovkino Label

No cash to spare for a movie show,
And work is piling up, you know.
I write these lines with heavy groans –
In "ARS," ***Three Ages*** *stands alone,*
Unseen, my heart sinks low.
Sergei Chekmarev, 1926

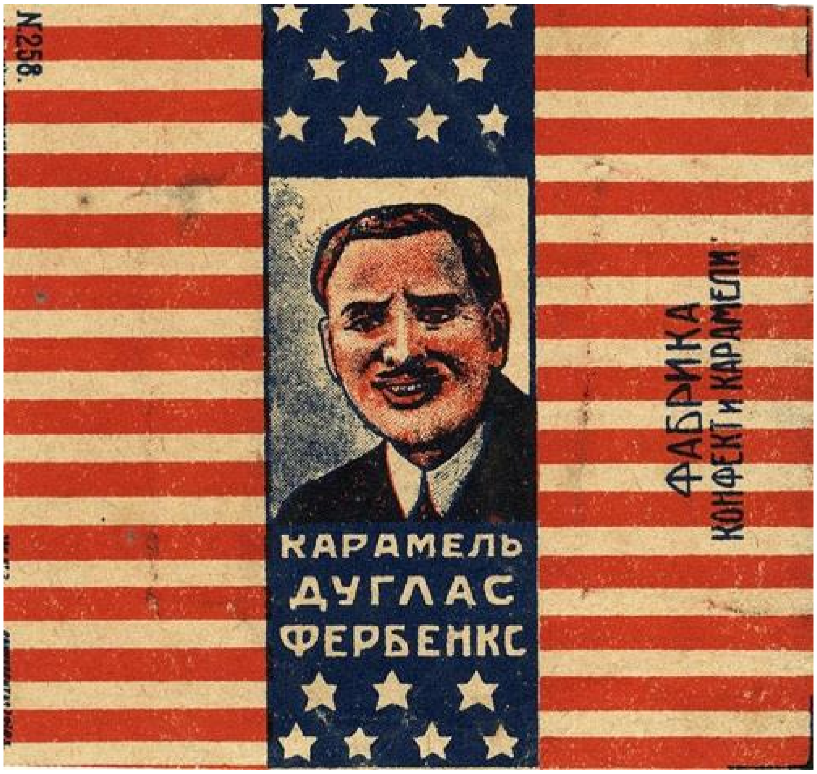
In many interviews over the years, Buster Keaton reminisced about a surprising achievement: he claimed to have been more popular than Charlie Chaplin in Russia, or, as it was known then, the Soviet Union, at one point. This insight, he said, came from Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, who visited Moscow in the summer of 1926.

Archival research backs up his claim. Just before the famous couple's visit, Keaton's films *Our Hospitality* (shown during the winter of 1926) and *Three Ages* (screened soon after) had captured Soviet audiences' hearts. Local film critics didn't stop at calling his work greatly entertaining — they hailed it as high art, applauding Keaton's acting style, subtle humor, and masterful filmmaking. At the same time, Buster didn't shy away from pointing out that his success in the Soviet Union came with a catch: he didn't get a dime from it. According to him, the Russians used to purchase a single copy of each of his films in Germany for just $5,000, screen it in Moscow, and then just create more copies to distribute and show them throughout the entire country. To understand how this process worked and whether it was even possible, let's take a quick look at the history of Soviet film distribution.

Part 1. Mysteries of Soviet film distribution

After the October Revolution of 1917, which brought the Bolsheviks to power,[1] and the Civil War that followed (lasting until late 1922), the Russian film industry was left in ruins. During the early 1920s, it survived almost entirely on semi-legal imports of foreign films.[2] Soviet audiences, like the rest of the world, were particularly enamored with Hollywood. Movies starring Fairbanks and Pickford, D.W. Griffith's films with Lillian Gish, and comedies by legends like Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Max Linder, and even lesser-known comedians like Monty Banks were immensely popular. At the same time, in the early 1920s, the official channels for importing films that had existed before the Revolution were dismantled, and new ones had yet to be created. Pirates smuggled films from the West and through China, while a bunch of newly formed private and state-owned companies competed to legally acquire mostly old foreign movies through intermediaries in Germany, as Buster correctly recalled, and some other European countries.

It wasn't until 1925 that the USSR government established full control over film imports and distribution with the creation of the state-run *Sovkino* company.[3] Initially, *Sovkino* attempted to negotiate directly with Hollywood studios, but the Soviets' terms for purchasing movies were considered unworkable. For instance, the company offered just 2,500 rubles for the nationwide screening rights to a film — roughly $1,250 at the time — and even then, the payment was to be made on credit, contingent on the film's box office earnings. As a result, the first successful deal between the Soviet and American film industries didn't happen until late 1928. That year, Joseph Schenck — a producer for Buster Keaton and the head of United Artists, who was born in Russia as Joseph Mikhailovich Sheinker and emigrated to the US at age 14 — visited Moscow. Following his long-awaited visit, *Sovkino* finally secured rights to five films directly from United Artists, including Keaton's *The General*, as well as several titles from Universal Studios.[5]

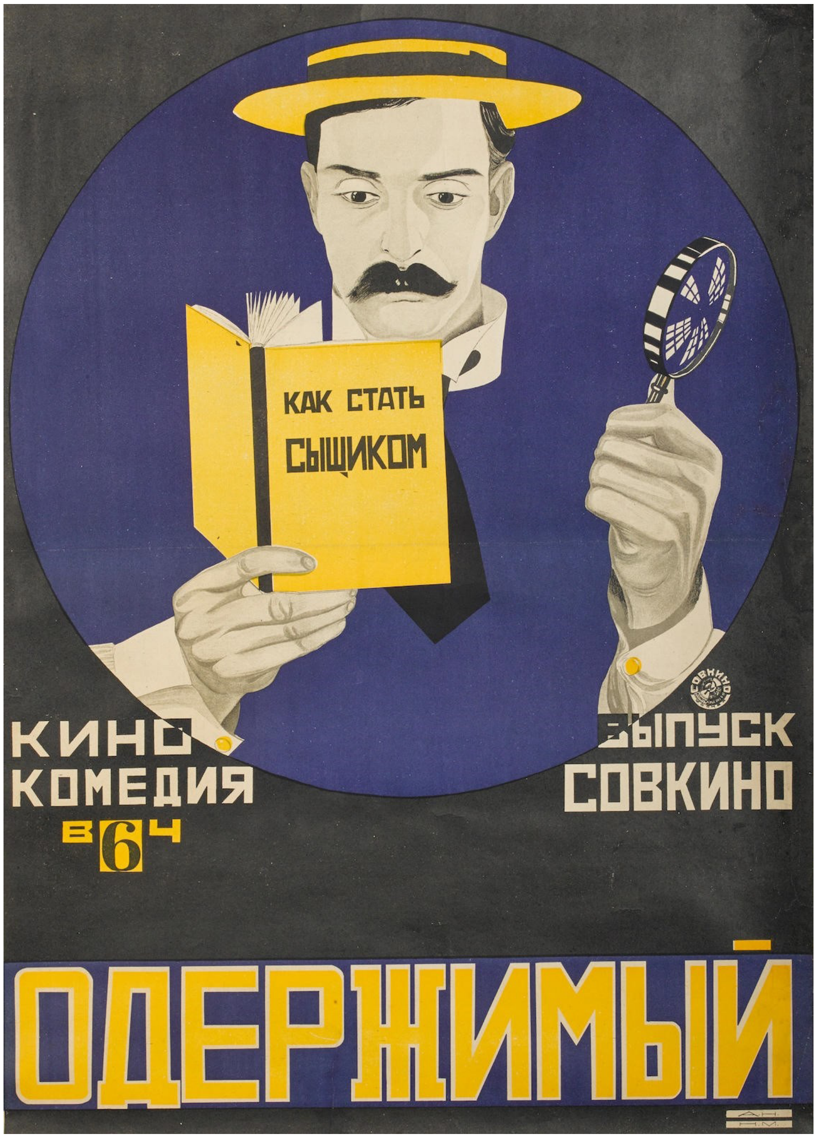


Douglas Fairbanks candy wrapper

However, Soviet audiences got their first glimpse of Buster much earlier — through short films. While direct evidence of Keaton's own two-reelers being shown there remains scarce, his collaborations with Roscoe Arbuckle were somewhat familiar to local audiences. In early 1924, the *Goskino* company acquired in Latvia and limitedly distributed a batch of ten of Arbuckle's old short films.[6] These included a few featuring Keaton, such as *Coney Island* (released locally as *Fatty by the Sea*), *Out West* (*Fatty in the Desert*), and *The Bellboy* (surprisingly titled *The Handsome Servant*). One memorable gag from *The Bellboy* — involving a horse and an elevator — was even analyzed in Sergei Eisenstein's memoirs as a prime example of extracting maximum comic effect from a given situation.[7]

But Buster Keaton's real rise to fame in the Soviet Union began with the release of his feature films in 1925 and 1926. In the fall of 1924, just before *Sovkino* monopolized film imports and distribution, the Leningrad-based company *Sevzapkino* pulled off an impressive feat: through two intermediaries — the short-lived German company *Berolina Film* and the French *SOFAR* (*Société des Films Artistiques*, co-founded by Russian émigrés) — they managed to bring new American blockbusters to Soviet screens instead of outdated stockpiles.[8] Among the 60-plus films they acquired were all three of Keaton's features released by that moment: *Sherlock Jr.*, *Our Hospitality*, and *Three Ages*. However, *Sevzapkino*'s budget was rather tight, so they could only afford a limited number of copies for each film. Even *The Thief of Baghdad*, starring the wildly popular Fairbanks (so beloved in the USSR that local candies were made in his honor), reportedly played in Moscow using just three copies across five cinemas.[10]

At the time, Keaton was still relatively unknown to Soviet audiences, which adds credibility to his claim that the USSR bought only a single copy of each of his films. *Sevzapkino* screened all three of Keaton's features briefly in Leningrad in December 1924,[11] just before transferring all its acquired titles to *Sovkino*. Although *Sovkino* delayed the wide distribution of Buster Keaton's films for a year, their screenings in Moscow and Leningrad later proved to be a resounding success. Following the widespread screening of Keaton's films across the entire country — an accomplishment that certainly required more than just one or even three copies of each film (Buster believed the USSR made around 25)[12] — he became, for a time, a dazzling star on a nationwide scale.



The Soviet poster for *Obsessed* (*Sherlock Jr.*) by Alexander Naumov.

Part 2. "Globally acknowledged best modern comedian"

Articles about Buster Keaton began appearing in the Soviet press in 1925. One of the earliest, a review titled *Comedy Without Chaplin* by Vladimir Posner, a writer and critic who lived in France, where Keaton was already well-known, was published in the June-July issue of *A.R.C. Cinema-Magazine*.[13] Posner singled out Keaton in his review, praising his distinctive "tragic mask" and speculating that, had Keaton been taller, he might have pursued a career in tragedy rather than comedy. Posner also directly compared Keaton to Chaplin, claiming:

"No comedian other than Charlot has so many first-

> rate movies. Keaton is essentially talented; in the most mediocre of his movies, there are flawless scenes."

However, he also noted what he believed was Keaton's biggest challenge with general audiences:

> "The only thing you can reproach him with is excessive intelligence and intellectualism, the consequence of which is a certain dryness. His pictures do not cause the animal laughter that accompanies the appearance of Chaplin on the screen."

Despite this critique, Posner championed introducing Keaton to Soviet audiences as soon as possible — a suggestion that was nearly realized by the time his article was published. *Sherlock Jr.* — renamed *Obsessed* (i.e., obsessed with the idea of becoming a detective) — premiered in Moscow on September 1, 1925, at the *Sha Noir* theater.[14] For about a month, the film circulated briefly among various theaters in the capital. However, due to minimal advertising and Sovkino's decision to delay broader distribution, Keaton's debut in the USSR failed to generate significant public buzz. Nevertheless, the few journalists who attended premiere screenings were highly impressed. A. Abramov in a *Kino* newspaper review gave this poetic description of Buster's appearance:

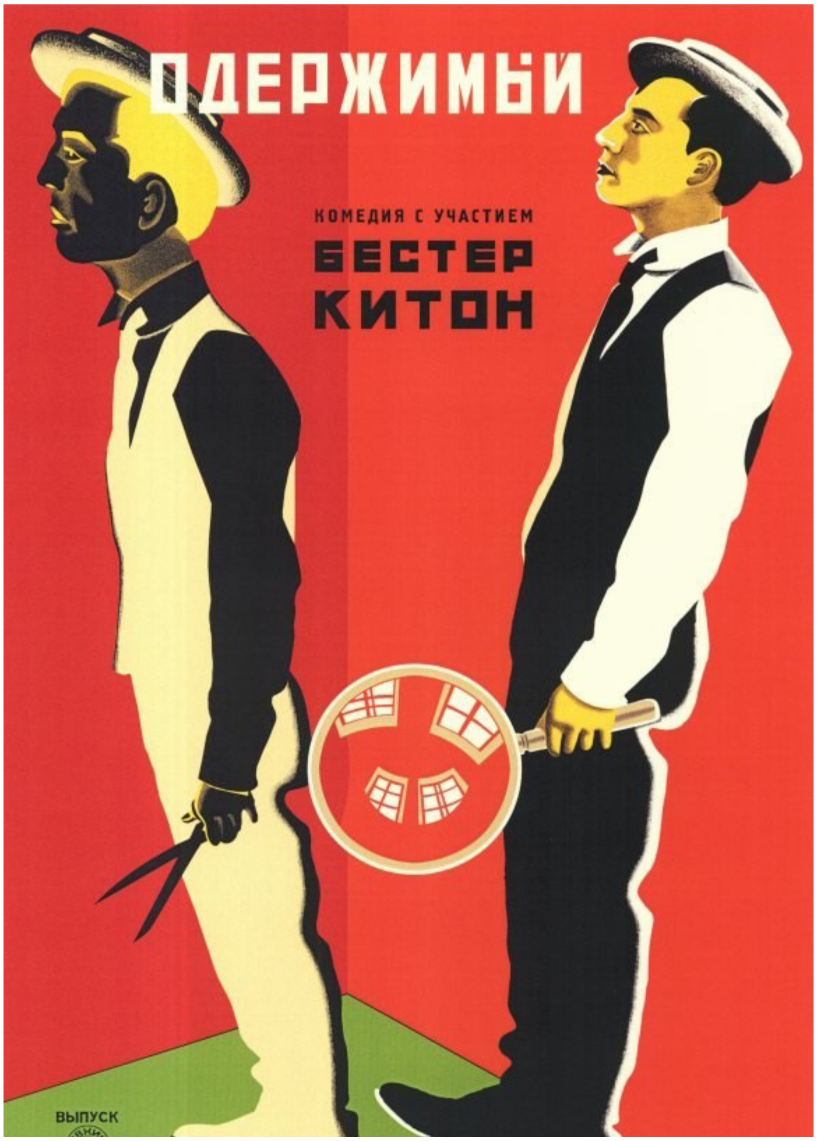
> "The face expression from the label of a patent remedy for neurasthenia. Frozen features without the slightest sign of a smile. Calm absent-mindedness of the philosopher in the guise of a passportless vagabond."

Following Posner's critique, he emphasized Keaton's subtlety and greater complexity compared to Harold Lloyd, who had hit Soviet screens earlier and was immensely popular in the USSR at the time:

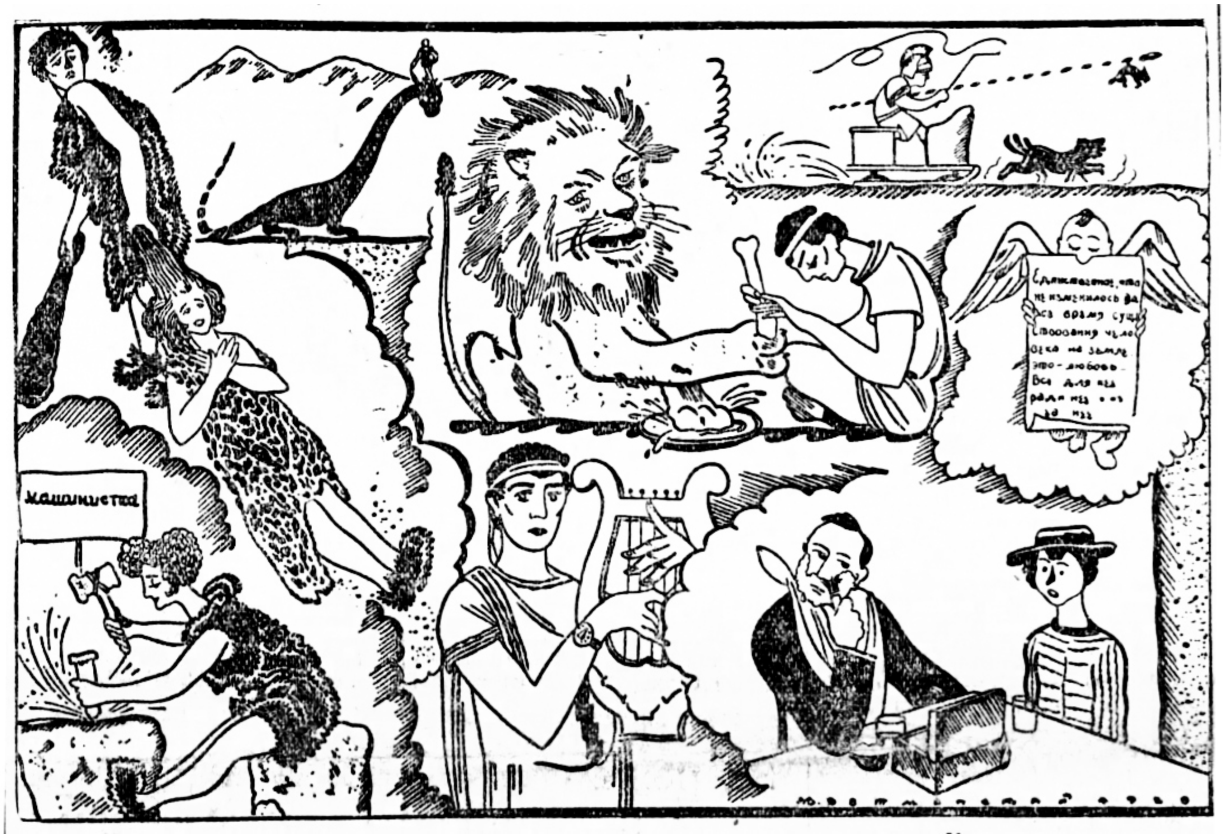
> "Lloyd is more understandable, more plausible. When you watch his movies, you don't have to think about it at all, you don't have to explain Lloyd to yourself. But Keaton makes you think from the first title. When the first plans show you the grim features of a neurotic on a frozen face, you will be surprised – is it a comedian? But after a dozen frames, you are already smiling. Keaton begins to act. He is peculiar. He manages to cheer without being cheerful, and to make you laugh without being funny. He looks like a man who says witty things without even smiling. [...] This kind of absurdity has its own system, which opens to us prospects of clever invention, subtle humor and poignant observation."

Another reviewer, writing under the pseudonym A.A. for *New Spectator* magazine, immediately hailed *Sherlock Jr.* as "one of the wittiest comic films in general"[16] and once again pointed out that Keaton demanded much more from his audience than most comedians of the era:

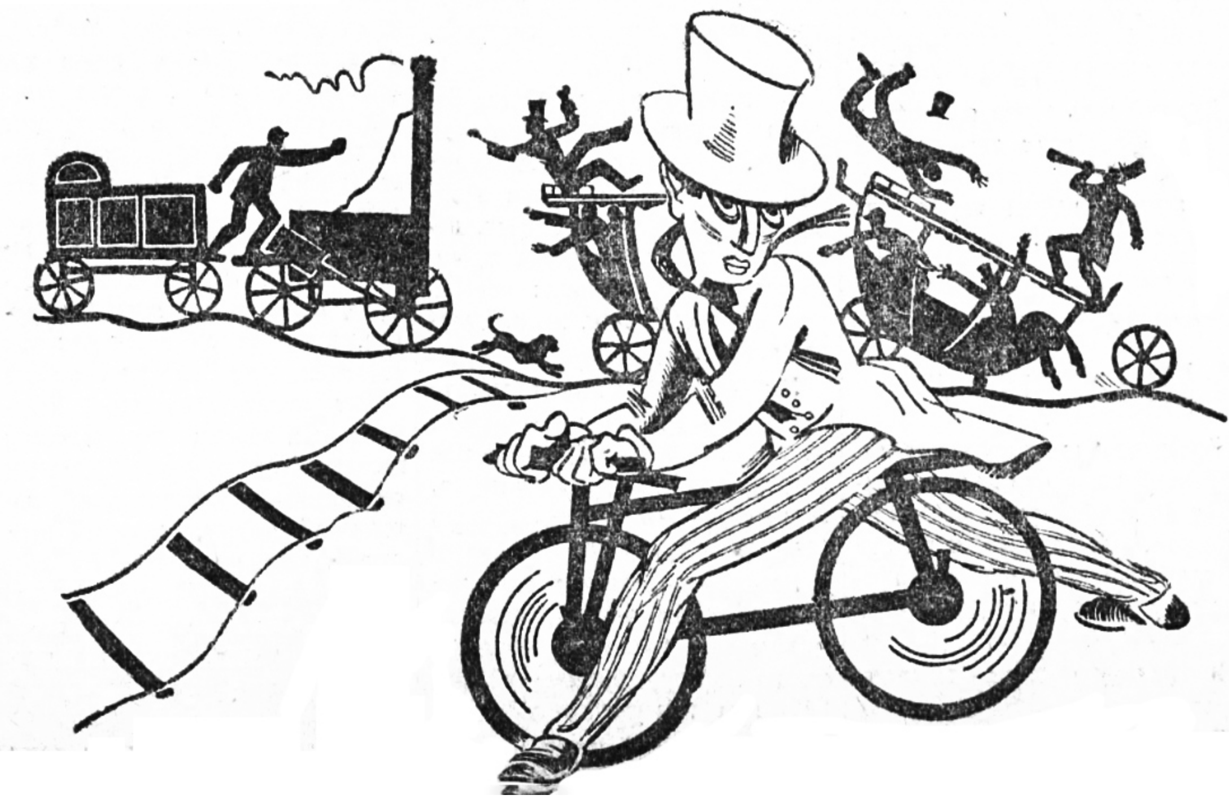
> "Keaton's humor is not external but internal, not in the nature of his techniques but in the meaning behind their creation, not in the mecha-



The Soviet poster for *Obsessed*
by the Stenberg Brothers.



Art for *Three Ages* by M. Getmansky,
Cinema: Weekly Newspaper, No 23 (143), June 8, 1926



Art for *Our Hospitality* by B. Virganski,
Cinema: No 9 (129), March 2, 1926

nism of the absurdities that surround him but in the causes that set that mechanism in motion. One must observe Keaton very closely to truly understand him."

In December 1925, the USSR's leading film magazine, *Soviet Screen*, published a one-page article on Keaton under the title *Hamlet of Comedy*.[17] The piece described his "solemn, stone-like expression, sad eyes, and not a sign of a smile," once again comparing him to Lloyd:

> "It's hard to say what prevails in Buster Keaton: sophisticated acting technique or his personal great charm. Like Lloyd, Keaton has great ingenuity and a large stock of tricks, but the manner in which he presents them to the public is extremely peculiar. Keaton's mask is more subtle, more intelligent than Lloyd's mask. Although Lloyd is closer to the masses, Keaton's acting culture is a step above."

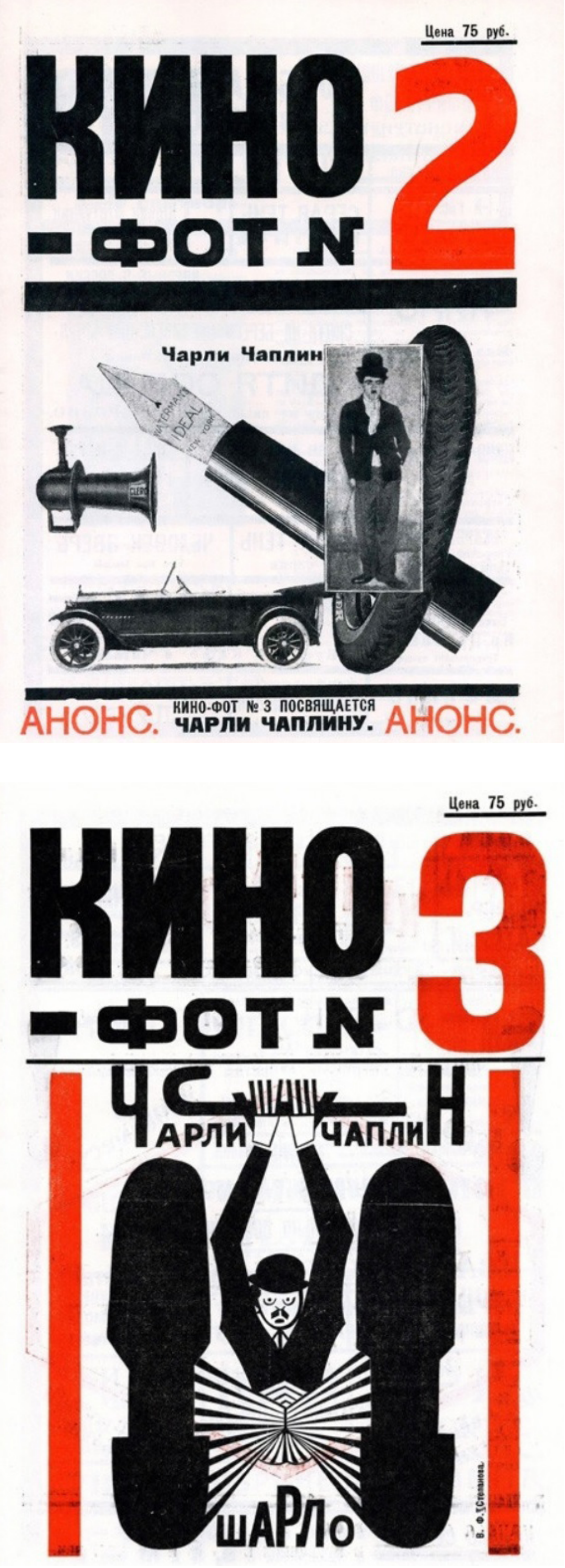
When *Sherlock Jr.* returned to theaters in August 1927, Keaton had already become a famous name in the USSR, thanks to the success of his other two films. This time the movie was met with an overwhelmingly warm reception. One of the most prominent Soviet film critics, screenwriter Vladimir Nedobrovo, reviewing the movie in *Life of Art* magazine,[18] pointed out not only "exceptional formal mastery" of Keaton the director (Soviet film criticism often saw him in that capacity first and foremost), but also his "tremendous ability to fill the film with an idea, the brilliant use of "parody, irony and grotesque" and his "inexhaustible imagination". Finally, he concluded that "of all the achievements of the masters of the comedy genre of world cinema there is nothing worthy of comparison with the frames of *Obsessed*".

The impression left by *Sherlock Jr.* also reached beyond the realm of cinematic critique. For example, Buster made a brief appearance as a character in the movie script *The Heart of Cinema* (1926) by one of Russia's greatest 20th-century poets, Vladimir Mayakovsky. In his story, a group of Hollywood stars — including also Fairbanks, Lloyd, and Chaplin — leap off the movie screen to chase after the leading lady, who has abandoned the film for the real world. The renowned literary critic Lydia Ginzburg also captured her admiration in the diaries:

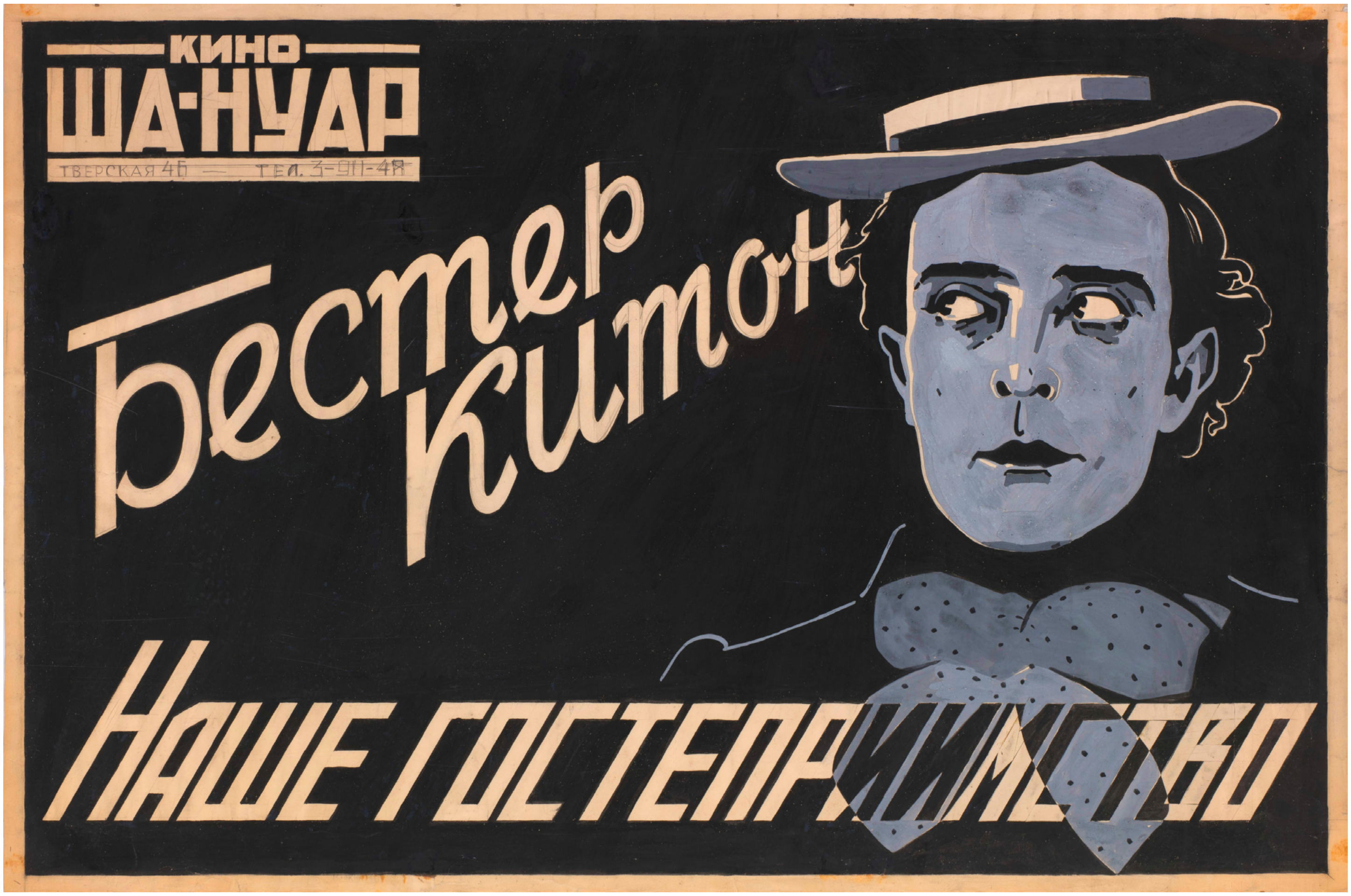
> "Went to see Buster Keaton's *Obsessed* tonight. This movie is singularly high art. The theater has never given me this feeling of aesthetic completeness and impeccable structure of the thing, the feeling of a hundred percent constructiveness; that is, it gives an all-pervasive construction — and nothing in the rest."

Buster's charm wasn't limited to intellectuals — he was also adored by everyday moviegoers. His popularity was enough for unscrupulous owners of small private cinemas to use his name as bait to draw crowds. A particularly outrageous example, capturing both Keaton's immense appeal and the chaotic state of Soviet film distribution, was reported by the *Evening Moscow* newspaper on August 26, 1927:

> "In Pokrovskoye-Streshnevo, a movie theater owned by NEP man Tsarev[19] resumed its operations. Recently, in an attempt to outdo his competitor — the MUNI cinema club — the audacious Tsarev employed a time-tested trick: bright, colorful posters were plastered on fences,



A 1922 issue of *Kino-Phot* magazine dedicated to Chaplin



Our Hospitality poster by Anatoly Belsky

advertising the screening of *Obsessed*, starring Buster Keaton. The public flocked to the box office, and in no time, the theater was packed.

"However, at the very last moment, the administration posted a modest sign apologizing for 'unavoidable reasons' and announcing a replacement screening of *The Sign of Zorro* in the Village. What could the audience do? They didn't want to go home, and it was too late to head to the MUNI cinema club. As a result, they sat through a dreadful hack job from some Trudkino. Can't something be done to stop this deceitful practice?"

Keaton's name became a surefire guarantee of packed theaters during the winter of 1926, when Sovkino finally decided to introduce *Our Hospitality* to Soviet audiences. The film premiered on February 22, 1926, at Moscow's Malaya Dmitrovka cinema, where it ran exclusively — and with great success — for over five weeks. The theater reported that in just the first week, 31,000 people attended the screenings, and by the end of its run, around 214,000 viewers had seen the film (nearly 10% of Moscow's population at the time!).

For this release, there was no lack of promotional efforts. Advertisements hailed *Our Hospitality* as "one of the best comedies in the world" and featured glowing endorsements from prominent figures in the arts. For instance, Sergei Eisenstein's cameraman, Eduard Tisse, praised the film's outdoor cinematography, contrasting it with the artificial sets common in most comedies of the era.[20] Actor and director Konstantin Eggert highlighted its "endless ingenuity, elegant editing, and the remarkable ease with which even the most complex scenes were executed," as well as Buster's inherent "sense of proportion and high charm" as an actor. The famous theater director and reformer Alexander Tairov called the film "an exceptional work, which is unthinkable to pass by without admiration," highlighting the technical ingenuity and "the impression of relaxed, effortless improvisation" created by the picture. One of Russia's most influential theater figures, alongside Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, declared *Our Hospitality* his favorite film, writing in *Izvestia* (February 21, 1926):

Keaton in the USSR

> "In the subtlety of performance, the sharpness of stagecraft, the tactful characterization, and the stylistic coherence of his gestures, Buster Keaton is an absolutely exceptional phenomenon. *Our Hospitality* strikes me as the finest of all American comedies I've seen. Beyond his acting talent, Keaton's mastery in creating mechanical comic effects is noteworthy. The performances of train and railroad tracks are significant achievements in this underexplored domain. This comedy will undoubtedly influence not only the tastes of our audience but also the techniques of our film industry."

Keaton's skill of using surroundings and props, along with the comedic "acting" of inanimate objects deeply impressed the Soviet critics as well. Some of them even compared *Our Hospitality* to the greatest achievement of young Soviet cinema – Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, where the iconic ship nearly takes on the role of the main character, just like Keaton's prehistoric steam engine. The only dissenting voice came from an article in *A.R.C. Cinema-Magazine*,[21] where Leo Moore criticized Keaton for making the audience smile "not by the techniques of his acting, but by the comicality of the situation." He found Keaton overly mechanical, artificial, and sham ("in Keaton's frozen face you see not a simpleton, but a trickster hiding his cunning behind simplicity"), which prevented Keaton from evoking the audience's sympathy and affection in the way Chaplin did with his "smiles through tears and the moist eyes of a just-beaten dog." In the next issue of the same (but renamed) magazine, critic A. Arsène countered this view,[22] pointing out that by rejecting typical clowning and not attempting to dominate the screen, Buster directs the viewer's attention to the environment in which the action takes place. Along with his deadpan mask, Arsène argued, this serves as an early attempt to introduce the principle of "defamiliarization"[23] to cinema art, which can transform the film from mere entertainment into a biting social satire. The futurist poet and writer Nikolai Aseev echoed this in his review[24] describing *Our Hospitality* as embodying "a sharp and poisonous irony" directed both at "the life and psychology of the international common man," who is prone to passivity rather than heroism, and at the romanticization of a bygone era with its ridiculous artifacts and absurd pseudo-noble traditions, which are still mirrored in modern social relationships. Aseev concluded his glowing review by placing Keaton above even Chaplin himself:

> "Buster Keaton is subtler than Harold Lloyd, deeper than Charlie Chaplin. His work in *Our Hospitality* is infinitely inventive and serious, despite the buffoonishly comedic exterior that clothes it."

It should be noted that if Keaton was indeed more popular than Chaplin in the USSR during the 1920s, it was partly for a very simple reason: Chaplin was rarely seen on Soviet screens. Admiration for him often stemmed more from foreign reviews than from direct experience, since most of Chaplin's films available in Soviet cinemas were short comedies from his early Keystone Studio days (1914–1915), purchased before

the Revolution. For example, during its 1927 summer run, *Sherlock Jr.* was paired with Chaplin's *Laughing Gas* (1914) — a rather unfair comparison. The reason for Chaplin's limited presence in Soviet cinemas was money – his films were prohibitively expensive for Soviet importers. For example, while Sovkino typically offered $1,250 per film, Chaplin demanded $70,000 for the license to show *The Gold Rush*,[25] and this exorbitant price undermined the revolutionary-era loving myth of "Charlie of the masses."[26] The only major Chaplin film available in Soviet distribution at the time was *A Woman of Paris* (1923), his only pure drama without Charlie himself in the cast, which was acquired by Sevzapkino alongside Keaton's feature films in 1924.[27] While the film achieved big local popularity, it received a lukewarm critical reception due to its subject matter and a lame happy ending. While the Soviet press in the early 1920s idolized Chaplin's iconic Tramp as a symbol of resilience and justice, by the decade's end, some critics began to view him differently, not as a champion of the oppressed but as a product of the bourgeois system. They argued that his films perpetuated the illusion of triumph for the "little man" — a cunning, cruel, and weak loner — allowing audiences to vent their frustrations in cinemas, only to reconcile with harsh realities.[28]

Meanwhile Keaton, by the time of his third major feature premiere, became such a favorite in the USSR, that he was promoted as "the globally acknowledged best modern comedian." *Three Ages* debuted exclusively in Moscow at the Kino-ARS cinema on May 21, 1926, enjoying a six-week run before being released across the country. Following the triumph of *Our Hospitality*, the film was well received, albeit with less enthusiasm. Critics had already lavished praise on Keaton's earlier works, and this time they allowed themselves a touch of criticism. The press praised the film's parallel montage of different historical periods, its parody and irony — especially in the modern segment — as well as Keaton's stunts, his filmmaker skills, and characteristic acting style. However, reviewers noted the relative emptiness of the plot, especially when compared to his previous films, some of them even guessed that *Three Ages* was an earlier, less mature effort than *Our Hospitality* or *Sherlock Jr.* The cultural gap also became more apparent: many of the images and situations Keaton parodied were too unfamiliar to Soviet audiences for the humor to fully resonate. Even though the primary target of the film's parody, D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), had been released in the Soviet Union in a heavily re-edited form (with the entire Christ sequence removed for ideological reasons), and much later than its original debut, it didn't have much success with local audiences. Furthermore, elements of US culture and everyday life central to Keaton's humor in the movie were mysteries to Soviet viewers, as writer Viktor Shklovsky, among others, noted:

> "*The Three Ages* is almost completely out of reach. The audience is interested in the dinosaur, the lion examining its manicured nails, and they admire Keaton's jumps... They laugh out of respect. [...] But Keaton's humor is cinematic. On the one hand, it is parodic. Keaton parodies epochal films like *Intolerance* and *The Birth of a Nation*. The funny moments are not in the film itself but in the spaces in between. [...] The clash of plans is comical. Here he plays with everyday details, but those also fail to land. The consequences of Prohibition or the ball game aren't as funny, since we don't know the details of the law or the rules of the game."[29]

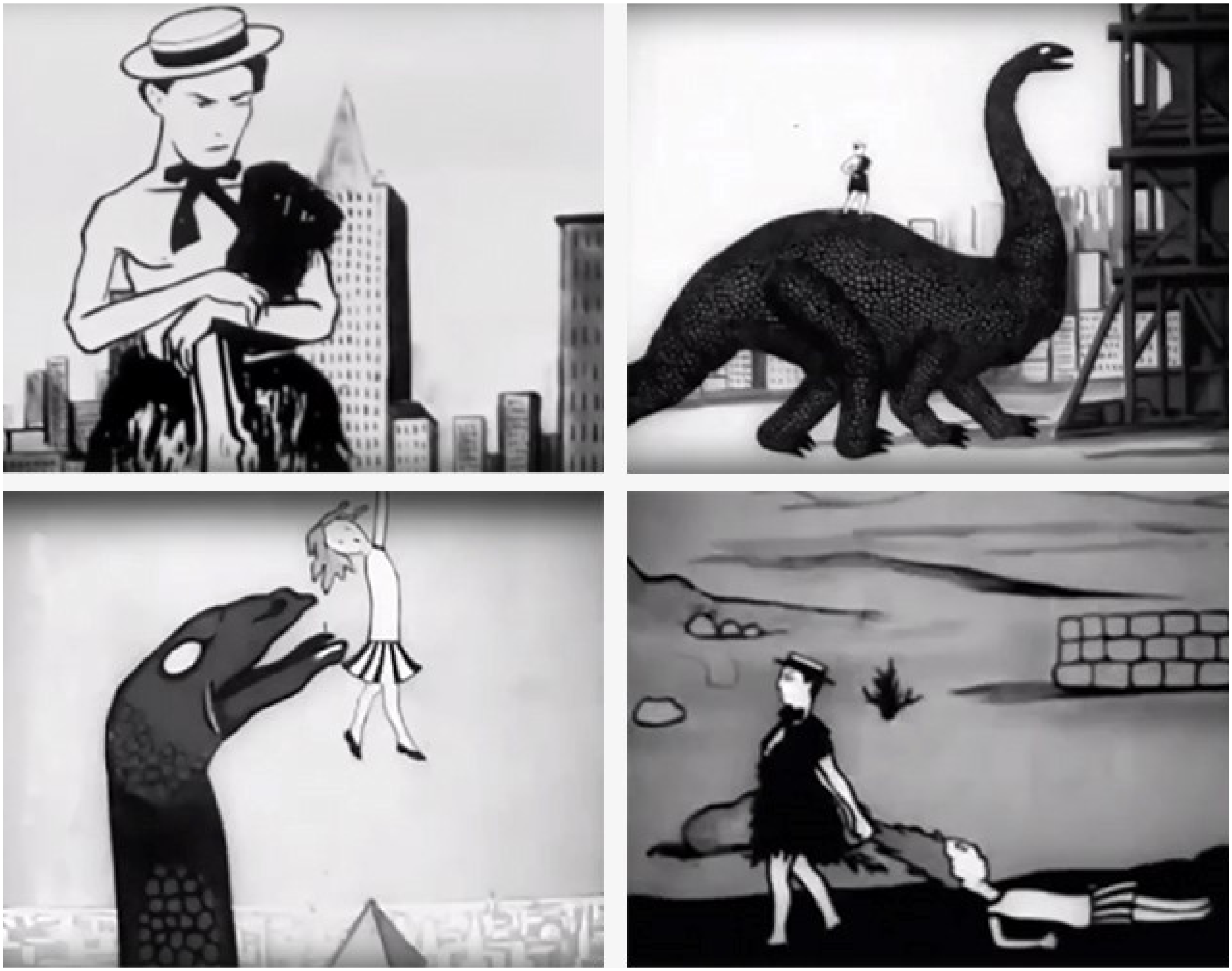
Бестер Китон

Keaton on a Soviet Postcard, 1927

Nonetheless, buoyed by the public's lingering affection for *Our Hospitality* and Keaton himself, *Three Ages* managed to succeed. Its elaborate stunts and striking settings ensured that even when the humor didn't fully connect, the film remained entertaining and worth watching.

By July 1926, when Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford visited Moscow, Buster Keaton had cemented his status as a star of the highest order in the USSR. While his fame may not have inspired candy tributes like Fairbanks', Buster's image adorned the covers of major film magazines such as *New Spectator* and *Soviet Screen*. In 1926-1927 Kinopechat, the state publishing house, issued at least three series of postcards featuring him, with a combined circulation exceeding 100,000. They also published a 16-page book-essay about Keaton by Semyon Gecht. The essay, initially printed in 15,000 copies and later expanded to 40,000, summarized the prevailing Soviet critical view of Buster:

> "Buster Keaton is a subtlest artist. His art seems at first simple, limited. He slowly wins the audience's sympathy. Slowly, but surely. His remarkable acting techniques are sometimes unnoticed at



Cartoon Buster in *One of Many* (1927)

first; in contrast to others, Keaton does not expose his manner of playing; his virtuosity is his 'sealed secret.'

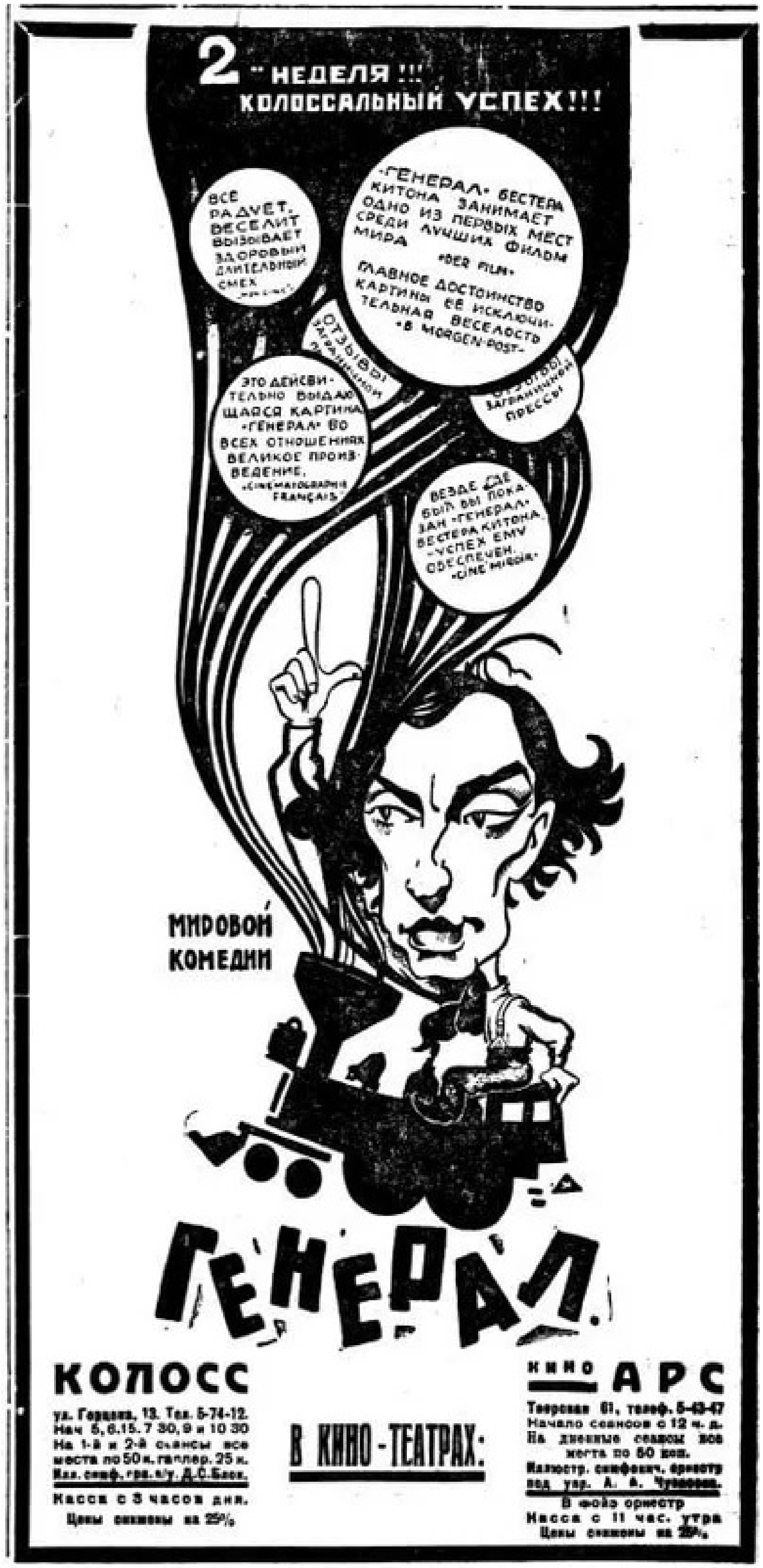
"Buster Keaton is undoubtedly subtler and nobler than other famous comedians. Narrow-minded audiences can get lost: you don't know when to smile – what if it was just a coincidence? [...] Buster Keaton's weapon is irony. Irony is always perceived later and more difficult than a simple joke. Keaton's weapon is cold and venomous, and his work sometimes resembles the pen of Anatole France."[30]

In 1927, Keaton was satirized alongside Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks in the cartoon *One of Many*, which poked fun at the Soviet public's obsession with Hollywood stars. Keaton's depiction in the cartoon borrowed from his roles in *Three Ages* and *Our Hospitality*: he appeared clad in a fur pelt riding a dinosaur, as in the former, but wearing his signature flat hat and concealing an arsenal of firearms beneath his clothing, as in the latter.

At the same time, the political climate in the Soviet Union shifted toward stricter economic and ideological controls, and the dominance of foreign films on Soviet screens began to wane, replaced by an influx of domestic productions. However, *The General*, Keaton's magnum opus, still reached Soviet audiences. It was the first Keaton film purchased directly from the United States, facilitated personally by Joe Schenck. The film premiered on June 4, 1929, in two theaters at once, ARS and Colossus, each of which ran it for three weeks. In the USSR as a whole, the distribution of *The General* continued at least until 1933 (in the Union republics).

By that time, Soviet film criticism had largely shifted its focus to domestic productions, paying less attention to foreign films. Nevertheless, *The General* proved significant enough to spark debate in the press. Despite growing ideological pressure, the film unexpectedly received a positive review in *Red Star*,[31] the all-union newspaper of the USSR's People's Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs.

Its reviewer, A.F., noted that Keaton was on the side of the Southerners, "the reactionaries and slave-owners," but immediately softened this transgression by stating that "the ideology of the warring parties is not reflected in the film at all,"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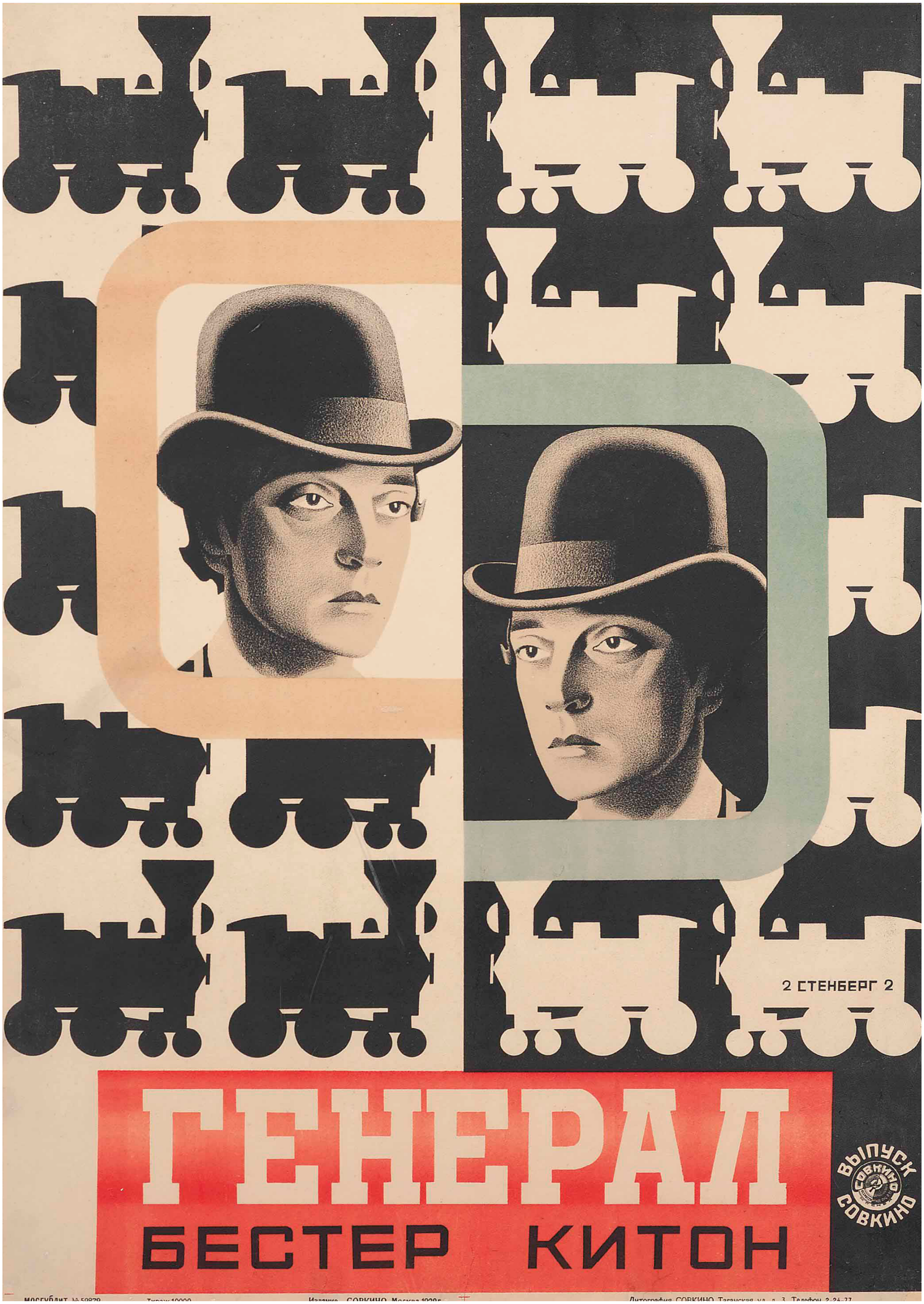
Advertisement for *The General*, *Evening Moscow* newspaper, June 1929

and that "the viewer sympathizes not with the Southerners," but with "the young engineer of the locomotive The General, an absent-minded yet resourceful good fellow," whose allegiance to the Southern camp is "a mere coincidence." After labeling this apolitical stance as "typically petty-bourgeois," the author abandoned his ideological digging and proceeded to praise the film's "great artistic merits": Keaton's performance, which "captivates the viewer so much that everything else is forgotten," the engaging plot, the "play with objects," the costumes, the settings, and even the depiction of military action.

In response the magazine *Soviet Screen* fired back with no fewer than three articles criticizing the film. In issue No. 25[32] an entire page was dedicated to *The General* with a review titled "An Instructive Story." Its author, Konstantin Feldman — a revolutionary and a real participant in the *Potemkin* mutiny who later played himself in Eisenstein's film — evaluated movies primarily from an ideological standpoint. Of all the American comedians, he found the "correct" stance only in Chaplin, still mythical to Soviet audiences, for "ruthlessly exposing the fundamental contradictions of bourgeois society." He understandably disliked *The General*, in which "the greatest historical event — the war between America's North and South" — was "reduced to the adventures of a locomotive engineer."

Unlike the *Red Star* reviewer, Feldman saw Keaton's main fault precisely in his refusal to reveal the war's meaning, "diligently avoiding political attacks" against either Northerners or Southerners, portraying both as "brave, decisive, and good guys." (Feldman himself viewed neither side positively). Although he conceded that "in the mathematical precision of his movement," Buster had achieved "Chaplinesque perfection," and that his "subtle performance still captivates the viewer with its unpredictability," Feldman concluded that in *The General* Keaton's "things no longer play a role," that "one feels a wilting of creative imagination," and that "the highest mastery and the greatest talent cannot save an artist from creative death if he tries to escape an honest exploration of life." Keaton's sad case, he argued, should serve as a "profoundly instructive" example for Soviet filmmakers.

The following month, in the same Soviet Screen (No. 29)[33], film critic and screenwriter Ippolit Sokolov, while acknowledging that *The General*, among other foreign pictures, possessed a "sharp and engaging conflict," as well as a "clarity, rigor, and precision in its cinematic language of script and editing" from which Soviet directors should learn, accused the film of latent bourgeois agitation. He called *The General* "pro-war agitprop," where war is shown "as a funny and pleasant pastime," and where "the plot annihilates"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The General poster by
the Stenberg Brothers, 1929

its "every social meaning." Interestingly, all three reviewers noted that Keaton, despite his protagonist being a Southerner, does not make the audience sympathize with either side. According to Sokolov, however, the Northerners and Southerners are portrayed not positively but as "equally cretinous," and the film "uses Keaton's brilliant gags to idiotize history." A third article, published in No. 30[34] by a critic writing under the weird nickname Steklyanny Glaz ("Glass Eye"), went even further, attacking *Red Star* and A.F. directly and accusing the reviewer of "astounding naivety" for failing to unmask what he considered the film's masterful bourgeois propaganda, "permeated with a militaristic spirit," preparing public opinion for war under the guise of harmless entertainment.

Similar sentiments prevailed in the "simpler" press. The railway newspaper *The Whistle*, previously consistently enthralled with Keaton, published four "most honest" reviews by respected railway workers. They called *The General* "foreign trash that offers nothing to the mind or the heart" and "ideologically unsatisfying for the workers," claimed that "Buster Keaton's gags have grown tiresome and implausible," and demanded "pictures in the revolutionary spirit, in the spirit of socialist construction." An anonymous author in the magazine for *Workers Screen*[35] also chided Keaton because his film "lacks social significance" and because he had taken, "to cater to bourgeois tastes," "an insignificant, meaningless episode" from the Civil War. Yet unlike the fiery critics of *Soviet Screen* and *The Whistle*, he delivered these charges somewhat listlessly – only to become suddenly animated when describing, in superlative terms, the film's merits and Buster's own talent, calling him "the most brilliant, unsurpassed creator of laughter." As a result, despite everything, his review ended up sounding almost like an advertisement:

> "The entire film is built on gags, on scenes of America's rich natural landscapes, and on Keaton's absolutely exceptional acting mastery. His inimitable naïve seriousness in comedic situations makes everyone roar with laughter until they drop."

Not all Soviet publications, however, were intent on discovering ideological traps in *The General*. In the October,1929 issue of *Life of Art*, film critic and screenwriter Daniil Rafalovich wrote:

> "*The General* is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable films of the season. A most witty parody that discredits the military melodrama, built on a mathematically precise structure and magnificently shot, this picture serves as a superb example of the intellectual creativity of Keaton – a subtle and cultured master."

The Ukrainian journal *Kino*[36] published a brief review in which critic Maria Romanovskaya recognized *The General* as Keaton's best film and expressed confusion over its failure in the United States:

> "*The General* triumphantly culminates Buster Keaton's entire cinematic journey as the most original comedian. [...] Writing about Keaton means repeating a hundred excellent reviews. Buster Keaton does not act through an 'immobile mask,' as it is attributed to him. On the contrary, he uses his entire body, every part of it, to create a cinematic image. *The General* is the best of all his films that we have ever seen, which is why we don't understand the negative attitude of the American audience toward it."

The wider public, it seems, was totally unbothered by the film's supposed bourgeois propaganda. For example, the newspaper *The Worker and Art*[37] reported that in Astrakhan, after just one evening of screenings, Eisenstein's new film *The Old and the New* (or *The General Line*) was pulled from distribution to make way for *The General*. The author was outraged at the substitution of the "General Line" with the "General's line" and demanded that Soviet viewers build "ideological dams" against the "flood of bourgeois influence." Alas, audiences still weren't willing to vote with their wallets, even for a renowned domestic filmmaker promoting the finest ideals of socialist nation-building.

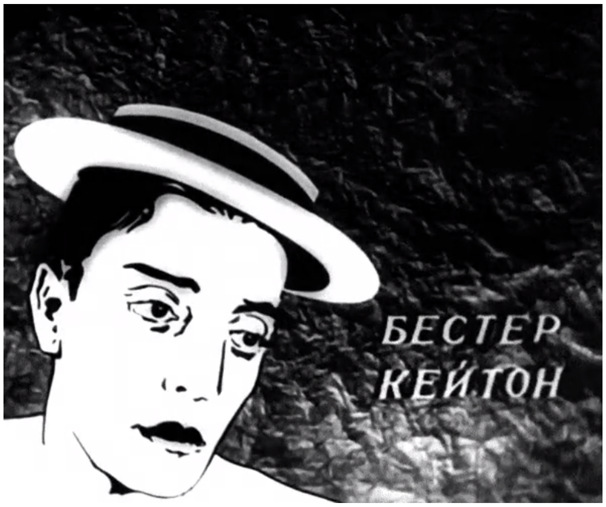
Perhaps the most elegant commentary on the Soviet public's attitude toward *The General* —

Keaton on location directing *The General*.

and Keaton himself — came, strangely enough, from the satirical magazine *Crocodile*, which published this quatrain by a poet using the pseudonym Mikasso:

Great success did on him fall,
So Buster Keaton's a general...
The only general of them all
To hold our screens in his thrall.

Unfortunately, no more Keaton films were shown in the USSR, but his popularity there endured for a long time. For instance, in February 1934, when Soviet ballet dancers Tatiana Vecheslova and Vakhtang Chabukiani toured the United States they declared that Buster was still the top film favorite in Russia (with Chaplin and Pickford trailing behind).[38] The opening credits of the 1934 Soviet musical comedy *Jolly Fellows* (or *Moscow Laughs*, directed by Grigori Aleksandrov), which remains popular to this day, feature a playful cartoon Easter egg: portraits of the Big Three American comedians alongside the cheeky disclaimer, "Chaplin, Lloyd, and Keaton ARE NOT INVOLVED in this picture." (The film also includes a chaotic scene in which a herd of cows invades human spaces — a sequence strongly reminiscent of Keaton's *Go West*.) In 1935, Soviet newspapers surprisingly covered Keaton's bankruptcy and his stay in a sanitarium — an extraordinary move for the tightly controlled media of the time. Later, press mentions and literary references to Keaton occasionally resurfaced, keeping his memory alive, and the author of the first (and, it seems, the only) Soviet book on slapstick, *The World Inside Out* (1983), film director and screenwriter Leonid Trauberg, so admired Keaton's work that he gave him noticeably more space than Chaplin there.



Buster in *Jolly Fellows*, 1934.

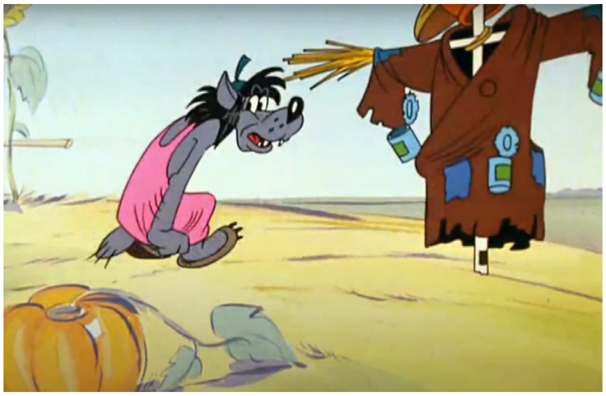
Buster in *Khitruk's Film, Film, Film (1968)*

Part 3. Buster Keaton and the Soviet Film Comedy

Keaton's works also had a significant influence on the formation and development of Soviet comedy. Alexey Popov, director of one of the first Soviet comedies and road movies, *Three Friends and an Invention* (1927), credited *Our Hospitality* as his main inspiration:

> "We really enjoyed the humor of this comedy: the film depicted the first railway, with all the amusing quirks of the journey. In addition to Buster Keaton's talented performance, the movie conveyed the atmosphere of a funny, absurd bygone era. This atmosphere inspired us to create the film."

Buster also left his mark on Soviet animation. Fyodor Khitruk, one of the most famous Soviet animators and the creator of the beloved Winnie the Pooh cartoons, recalled how, as a child, he adored Keaton and watched *The General* "several times in a row, hiding under the seats between screenings." In 1968, Khitruk, who believed that it was his introduction to the films of Keaton and Chaplin that determined his choice of profession, paid tribute to Keaton in his satirical short *Film, Film, Film*, which opening features stills from Keaton films of different times, from *The Goat* (1921) to *The Railrodder* (1964). Another of Khitruk's works, a 1974 cartoon about timeless gender dynamics, directly referenced Keaton's *Three Ages* by setting the same love story in various historical periods. Even the most popular Soviet cartoon series *Well, Just You Wait!* (a Tom and Jerry-style show about a Wolf chasing a Hare) also reproduces many gags and situations



Well, Just You Wait! recreating a gag from *The Scarecrow* (1920)

from Keaton's short films, occasionally coming very close to direct copying.

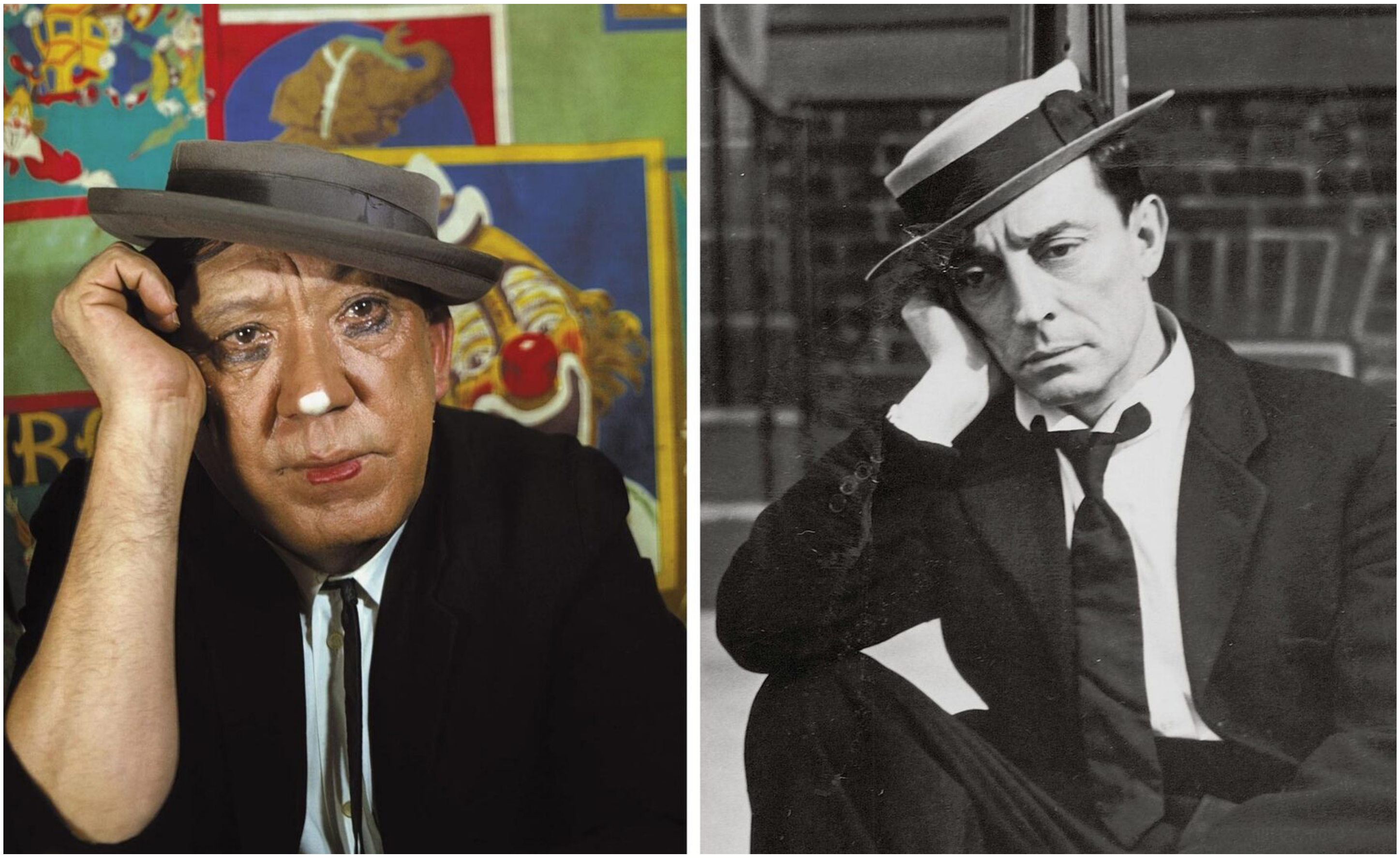
But Keaton's most significant impact on Soviet cinema was through the indisputably leading Russian comedian Yuri Nikulin and the "king of Soviet comedy," filmmaker Leonid Gaidai. Nikulin, a circus clown who later became one of Russia's most beloved film actors, discovered Keaton's work while studying at the Moscow Circus Studio School, where Keaton's films were shown as part of the curriculum. Nikulin admired Keaton's deadpan style, believing that a clown should not laugh but rather cause the audience to laugh at him. He adopted Keaton's approach to comedy and even incorporated a Keaton-esque flat hat into his circus performances, making it his own signature look.

Nikulin's collaboration with Gaidai as both actor and gagman began with the 1961 short *Barbos the Dog and the Unusual Cross*, a silent slapstick film that revived American silent comedy traditions on Soviet screens. Between 1961 and 1973, Gaidai produced two shorts and five feature films that masterfully adapted silent-era slapstick to the sound era, blending visual gags, action sequences, witty dialogue, and sharp satire of Soviet life. Gaidai, likely having studied Keaton's works at the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK), frequently incorporated open-space chases, long-shot framing, and absurd, cartoonish gags reminiscent of Keaton's style. Buster fans can easily spot reworked versions of some of his signature gags in Gaidai's films.

Gaidai's works (along with the *Well, Just You Wait!* cartoon series) remain, to this day, among the most beloved comedies across the entire post-Soviet space. Thus, Keaton's influence on Soviet comedy proved to be so profound that, even 100 years later, his jokes and sense of humor remain instantly recognizable to every generation here, making the experience of discovering his films feel like reconnecting with a long-lost relative.

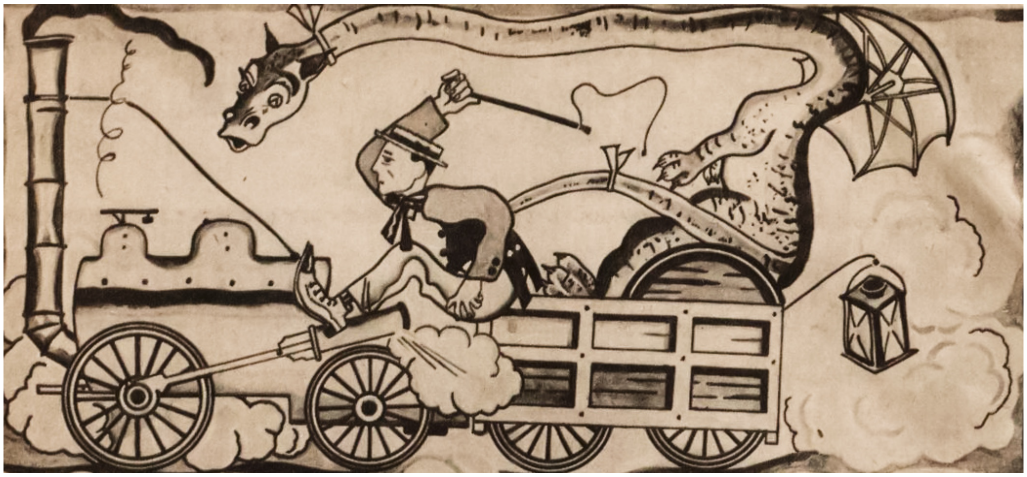
* * *

Ever since the Fairbanks couple informed him that he was "Movie Star Number One" in Russia, Buster Keaton never missed an opportunity to share this achievement with journalists. He fondly recalled it in his autobiography and interviews, even decades later: "One thing that makes me proud, but not rich, is the fact that in Russia, my movie passed Charlie Chaplin." With a laugh, he would describe the Soviet film distribution scam involving pirated copies as a good anecdote, joking that the Russians, having invented it "as



Yuri Nikulin and Buster Keaton

far back as 1918," were "still doing it today."[39] Always being skeptical of Marxism and the idea of a utopian communist society, Buster offered his own wry explanation for his popularity in the USSR: "Misery loves company, and the people of Russia see me on the screen and immediately feel that I am a worthy brother."[40] During his own periods of neglect and hardship, knowing that he was still remembered and cherished not only in Europe but also "in the darndest country in the world"[41] gave him strength and helped him persevere. One can only hope that Keaton would be pleased to know that, even today, a century later, his films continue to be shown across that country, and there are still people who care deeply about him and his legacy.



Art by M. Getmansky, *Soviet Screen*, No. 27, 1926.

FOOTNOTES

1. In *The Love Nest* (1923), when the Captain is dragged away by a whale, Buster stages a mutiny on the ship. Donning the Captain's cap, he briefly delivers a fleeting yet hilarious parody of Soviet revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin – a resemblance that looks rather obvious to anyone familiar with Lenin's iconic image and gestures.

2. According to the article "Quantity and Quality in Cinema," published in *Life of Art* (No. 44, 1925), Soviet films made up only 30% of the total film distribution in USSR even in 1925.

3. "For the Organization of Sovkino", *A.R.C. Cinema-Magazine*, No. 1, 1925, p. 2.

4. *The 1929 Film Guide*, ed. G. M. Boltiansky, p. 356.

5. Ibid, p. 357-358.

6. "Art for the Workers," No. 2, 1924.

7. Sergei Eisenstein. *Selected works*. Vol. 5. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968, p. 369.

8. "The Purchase of Foreign Blockbusters," interview by A.M. Slivkin, deputy director of Sevzapkino, *Kino-week*, No. 7, February 10, 1925.

9. S.K. Bratolyubov, "At the Dawn of Soviet Cinematography," 1976; list of European and U.S. films acquired and received by Sevzapzapkino from August 1924 to January 1925, p. 144.

10. "Mary and Doug sail Saturday on tour," *The Herald Statesman*, Mar 30, 1926, p.7.

11. S.K. Bratolyubov, "At the Dawn of Soviet Cinematography," 1976; list of the films shown in Leningrad in 1924, p. 141.

12. "Hollywood Clown Unwanted" by Henry Gris, *Keaton Chronicle* No 28.1, Winter-Spring 2020.

13. "Comedy Without Chaplin", *A.R.C. Kino-Magazine*, No 6-7, 1925, p.15.

14. "Black Cat" in French.

15. *Cinema*: Weekly Newspaper, No 28 (108), 1925, p.5.

16. *New Spectator*, No. 37, Sep. 15, 1925, p.16.

17. *Soviet Screen*, No. 36, 1925, p. 14.

18. *Life of Art*, No. 43, October 25, 1927.

19. A person who profited from private enterprise during the New Economic Policy (NEP) in Soviet Russia (1921-1928), when limited market mechanisms were reintroduced.

20. *Cinema*: Weekly Newspaper, No 8 (128), February 23, 1926.

21. "Go Ahead and Smile!", *A.R.C. Cinema-Magazine*, No. 3 (15), 1926, p. 28.

22. "Keaton as a principle", *Cinema Front* No. 2/3 (5/6), 1926, p. 27.

23. The artistic technique of presenting to audience common things in an unfamiliar or strange way so they could gain new perspectives and see the world differently. The term was coined in 1917 by the Russian formalists (Victor Shklovsky), who considered it the central concept of art and poetry. The concept has influenced 20th-century art.

24. *Cinema*: Weekly Newspaper, No. 6 (126), February 9, 1926.

25. G. Yusupova, "Foreign Films in the Soviet Distribution of the 1920s," *The Art of Cinema*, December 4, 2022.

26. "The Soviet Union Cinema Industry," *The Daily Worker*, November 20, 1926, p.3.

27. *Life of Art*, No. 49, December 7, 1926, p. 3.

28. A. Kurs. "Charlie the Agitator." *Print and Revolution*, 1926, Book 7, p. 98.

29. Soviet writer, literary and film critic Viktor Shklovsky on the perception of Keaton by the Soviet audience in his book *The Hamburg Account*, 1928. It must be said that rugby and baseball are not widely known games in Russia even now.

30. S. Geht, "Bester Keaton," Moscow: *Kinopechat*, 1926, p. 14.

31. *Red Star*, No. 139, June 20, 1929.

32. *Soviet Screen*, No. 25, June 25, 1929.

33. *Soviet Screen*, No. 29, July 2, 1929.

34. *Soviet Screen*, No. 30, July 30, 1929.

35. *Screen*, June 30, 1929.

36. *Kino*, No. 12, 1929.

37. *The Worker and Art*, No. 1, November 6, 1929.

38. *Daily News*, Los Angeles, February 13, 1934, p.12.

39. Keaton to Phillys Batelle, *The Solano-Napa News Chronicle*, March 15, 1965, p.7.

40. Keaton to John Scott, *The Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, April 13, 1930, p.41.

41. Keaton to Christoper Bishop, 1958, *Buster Keaton: Interviews* ed. Kevin W. Sweeney, p.57.

* * *

Olga Egorova is a researcher of early Hollywood and a biographer of Buster Keaton from Russia. For the past seven years, she has been studying his life and work, drawing on archival materials, contemporary press, and rare primary sources. Olga runs the largest Russian-language social media communities dedicated to Keaton, publishes articles in the Keaton Chronicles, and creates video essays about Buster and his films on her YouTube channel @BusterKeatonVK.

The
Silent Comedy Mafia

Main Entry: Ma·fia
Pronunciation: ʻmä-fE-&, ʻma-
Function: noun

Definition: A group of people of similar interests or backgrounds prominent in a particular field or enterprise: A tightly-knit group of trusted associates

The Silent Comedy Mafia is an officially unofficial newsgroup & clubhouse for authors, historians, scholars, archivists, producers, accompanists, noted collectors and fans dedicated to the restoration, preservation and promotion of silent and early sound film comedy.

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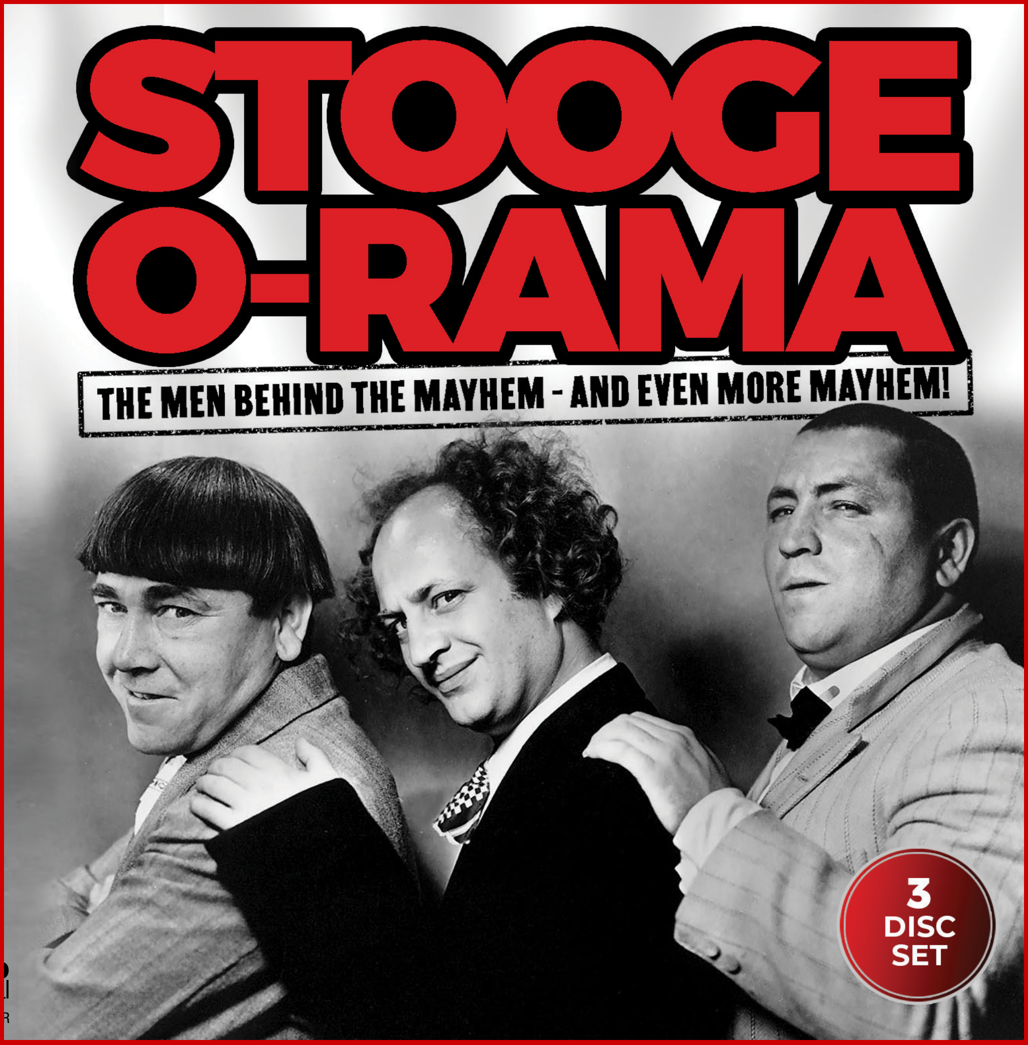
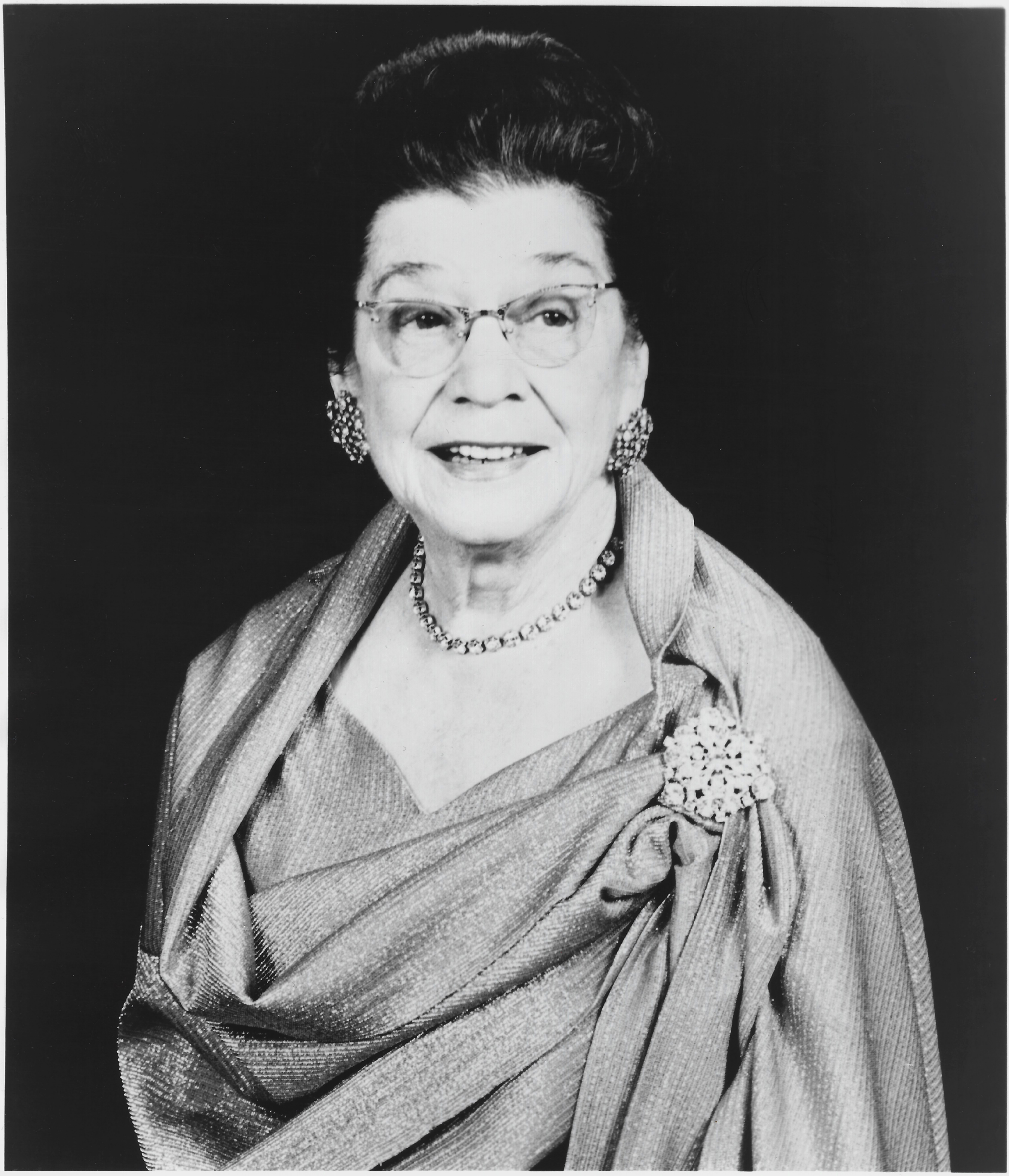
Cinemuseum LLC and *Kit Parker Films* offer fans of the Amalgamated Morons a chance to revisit the Golden Age of Stoogery with this new 3-Disc treasure trove of the rarest archival gems!

- Digitally remastered and upgraded HD version of the award-winning documentary program *Stooges: The Men Behind The Mayhem*
- Lost theatrical featurette *Surprise, Surprise* (1937) starring Moe, Larry, and Curly!
- Long unseen short subject *Everybody Likes Music* (1934) starring Shemp Howard



- Also includes 8 additional hours of unique bonus materials: unreleased outtakes, color home movies, rare television appearances, trailers, unseen archival interviews, NEVER BEFORE AVAILABLE commercials (including Larry's Fine's pitch for his book *Stroke Of Luck*), audio recordings from Moe and Larry's live personal appearances, family photo galleries, and much more new-to-home-video fun!



Minta Durfee Arbuckle
Widow of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle
First Leading Lady For Charlie Chaplin

SAG
AFTRA
EQUITY

MINTA DURFEE ARBUCKLE

In Person

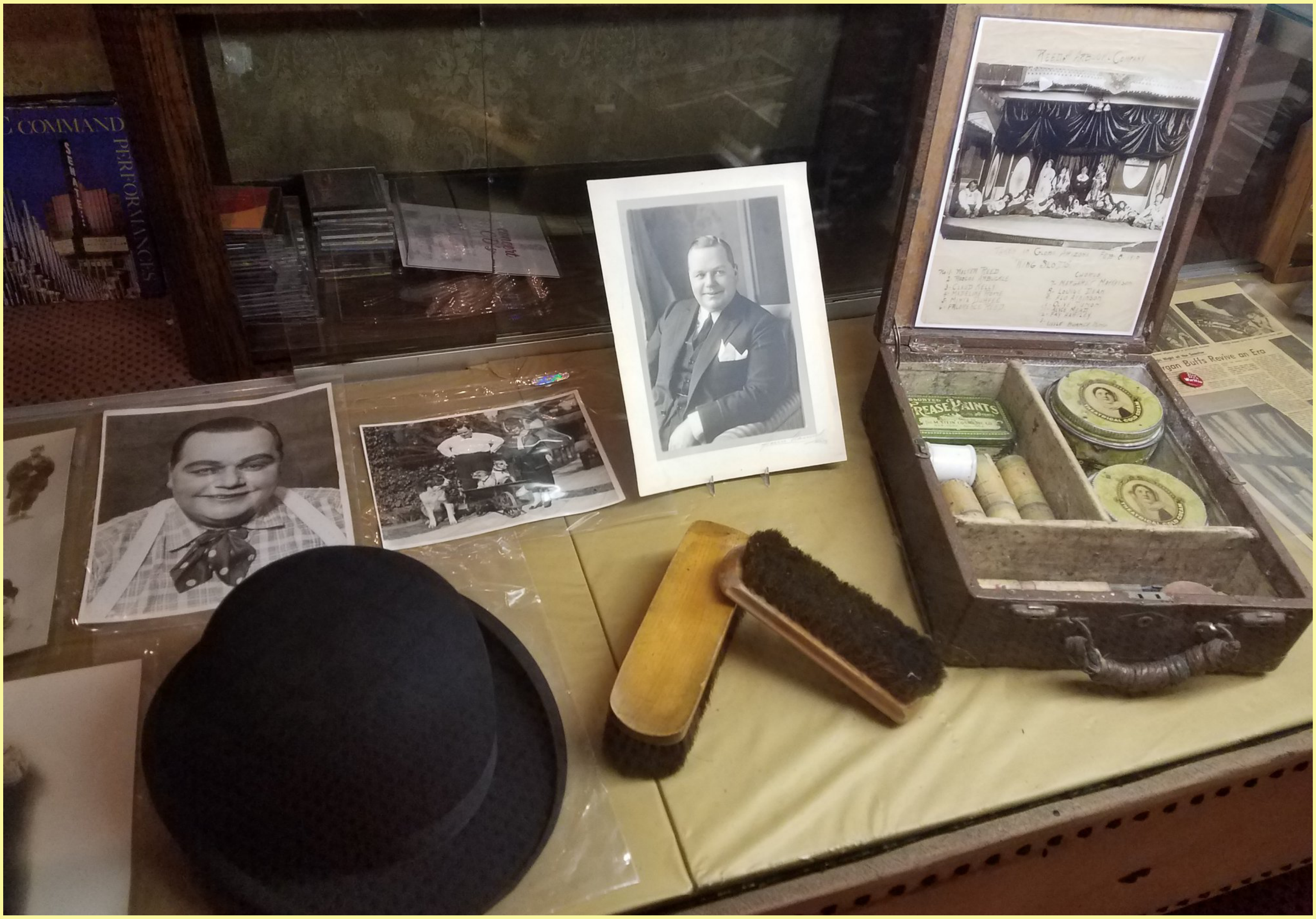
By Paul E. Gierucki

I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into when purchasing comedian Roscoe Arbuckle's personal scrapbook way back in 1998. The content was so amazing, so utterly compelling, I knew instantly that it must be preserved and shared with others. The initial thought was to pen a few biographical chapters and then reproduce the scrapbook with captions and some footnotes for historical context. Simple, right? I imagined that the writing, research, and layout could be completed within a year. Two at the very most. Fate, however, had other plans.

My decision to do the research from scratch, rely on primary sources only (a choice which has been both a blessing and a curse) sent me down paths that I never anticipated and pushed me even deeper down the research rabbit hole. This work led to the discovery of even more previously unknown archives replete with candid snapshots, behind-the-scenes photographs, personal letters, hand-written notes, datebooks, studio memos, contracts, telegrams, censorship documents, scripts, vaudeville schedules, personal items, unpublished interviews and audio recordings, all revealing details of forgotten film, radio, and stage appearances, unrealized projects, and so much more. The original book, which was to focus solely on the last few years of his life, gradually transformed into a full-blown biography encompassing the totality of Arbuckle's life and work — drawing exclusively from those otherwise undocumented primary sources.

During this unexpected 27-year odyssey, I have accumulated a great deal of material for which there is simply no place in the book. As the layout work continues, I thought readers of *Comique* might enjoy an exclusive look at some of the gems left behind:

In the 1960s, as nostalgia for the early years of Hollywood continued to grow, survivors of

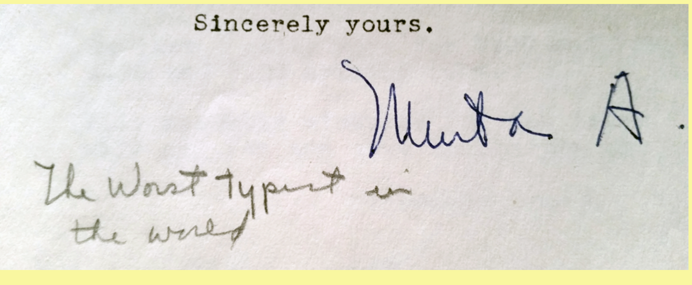


Display of personal items including Roscoe's stage makeup case

the silent era were thrust back into the spotlight. As a former member of Mack Sennett's Keystone Studios, Arbuckle's first wife, Minta Durfee, found herself suddenly in demand for newspaper interviews, television talk shows, and countless classic film festivals.

Branding herself as the "Widow of Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle" — despite that unfortunate title actually belonging to Roscoe's third wife, Addie McPhail — and the "First Leading Lady for Charlie Chaplin" she began traveling the world to share her memories of a life in film.

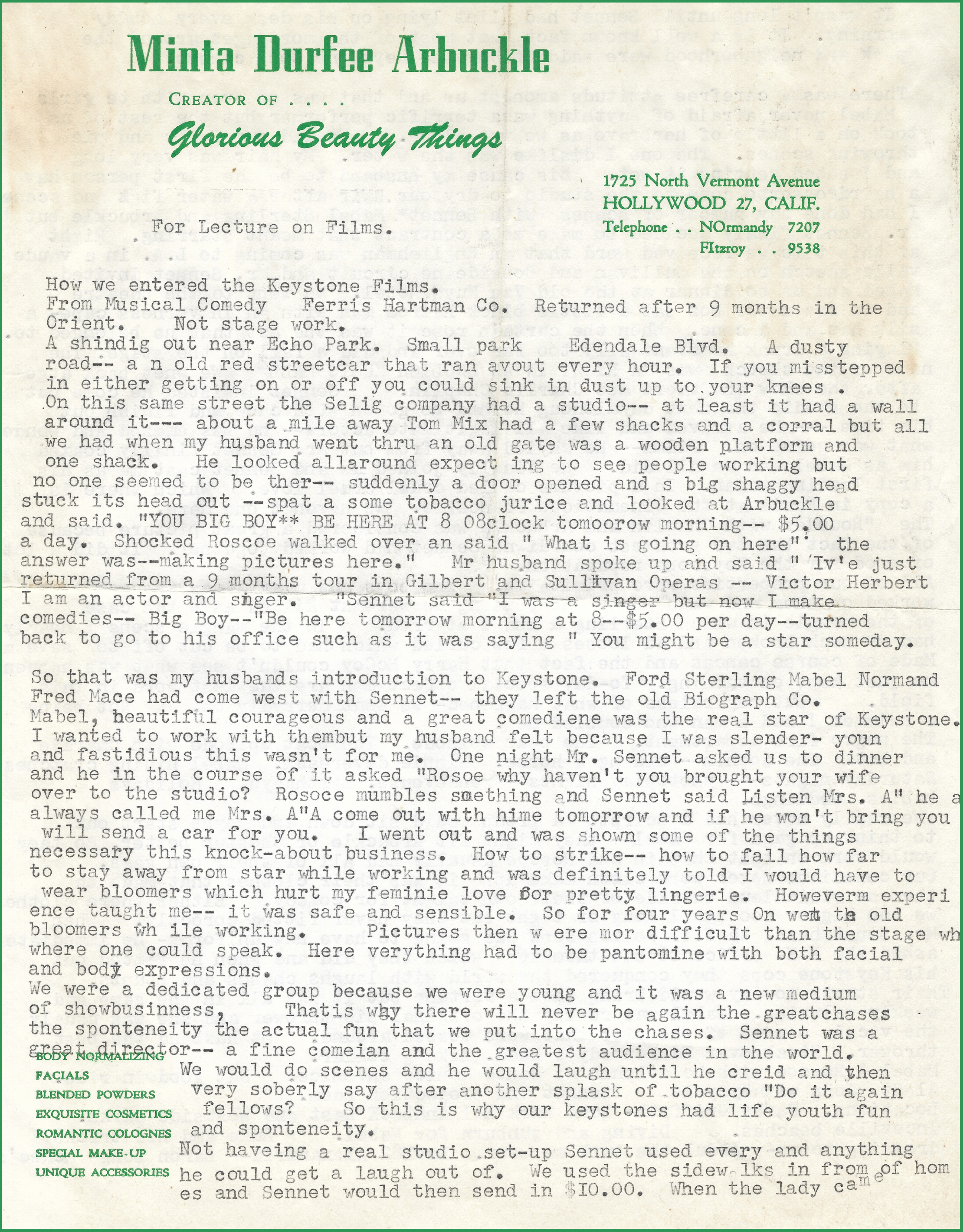
Presented here for the first time are Minta's own typewritten notes, on her company stationery, detailing some of the topics she planned to cover during her lectures. Some of the shorter memory prompts are intriguing and beg for additional research. Also of note are the various typographical errors. Minta had no trouble poking fun at this particular shortfall, once closing a personal letter with a handwritten postscript dubbing herself — "the worst typist in the world."



Sincerely yours.

Minta A.

The Worst Typist in
the world



Minta Durfee Arbuckle

CREATOR OF . . . .

Glorious Beauty Things

1725 North Vermont Avenue
HOLLYWOOD 27, CALIF.
Telephone . . NOrmandy 7207
FItzroy . . 9538

For Lecture on Films.

How we entered the Keystone Films.
From Musical Comedy Ferris Hartman Co. Returned after 9 months in the Orient. Not stage work.
A shindig out near Echo Park. Small park Edendale Blvd. A dusty road-- a n old red streetcar that ran avout every hour. If you misstepped in either getting on or off you could sink in dust up to your knees . On this same street the Selig company had a studio-- at least it had a wall around it--- about a mile away Tom Mix had a few shacks and a corral but all we had when my husband went thru an old gate was a wooden platform and one shack. He looked allaround expect ing to see people working but no one seemed to be ther-- suddenly a door opened and s big shaggy head stuck its head out --spat a some tobacco jurice and looked at Arbuckle and said. "YOU BIG BOY** BE HERE AT 8 08clock tomoorow morning-- $5.00 a day. Shocked Roscoe walked over an said " What is going on here" the answer was--making pictures here." Mr husband spoke up and said " Iv'e just returned from a 9 months tour in Gilbert and Sullivan Operas -- Victor Herbert I am an actor and singer. "Sennet said "I was a singer but now I make comedies-- Big Boy--"Be here tomorrow morning at 8--$5.00 per day--turned back to go to his office such as it was saying " You might be a star someday.

So that was my husbands introduction to Keystone. Ford Sterling Mabel Normand Fred Mace had come west with Sennet-- they left the old Biograph Co. Mabel, beautiful courageous and a great comediene was the real star of Keystone. I wanted to work with thembut my husband felt because I was slender- youn and fastidious this wasn't for me. One night Mr. Sennet asked us to dinner and he in the course of it asked "Rosoe why haven't you brought your wife over to the studio? Rosoce mumbles smething and Sennet said Listen Mrs. A" he a always called me Mrs. A"A come out with hime tomorrow and if he won't bring you will send a car for you. I went out and was shown some of the things necessary this knock-about business. How to strike-- how to fall how far to stay away from star while working and was definitely told I would have to wear bloomers which hurt my feminie love for pretty lingerie. Howeverm experience taught me-- it was safe and sensible. So for four years On went the old bloomers wh ile working. Pictures then w ere mor difficult than the stage wh where one could speak. Here verything had to be pantomine with both facial and body expressions.
We were a dedicated group because we were young and it was a new medium of showbusinness, Thatis why there will never be again the greatchases the sponteneity the actual fun that we put into the chases. Sennet was a great director-- a fine comeian and the greatest audience in the world. We would do scenes and he would laugh until he creid and then very soberly say after another splask of tobacco "Do it again fellows? So this is why our keystones had life youth fun and sponteneity.
Not haveing a real studio set-up Sennet used every and anything he could get a laugh out of. We used the sidew lks in from of homes and Sennet would then send in $10.00. When the lady came

BODY NORMALIZING
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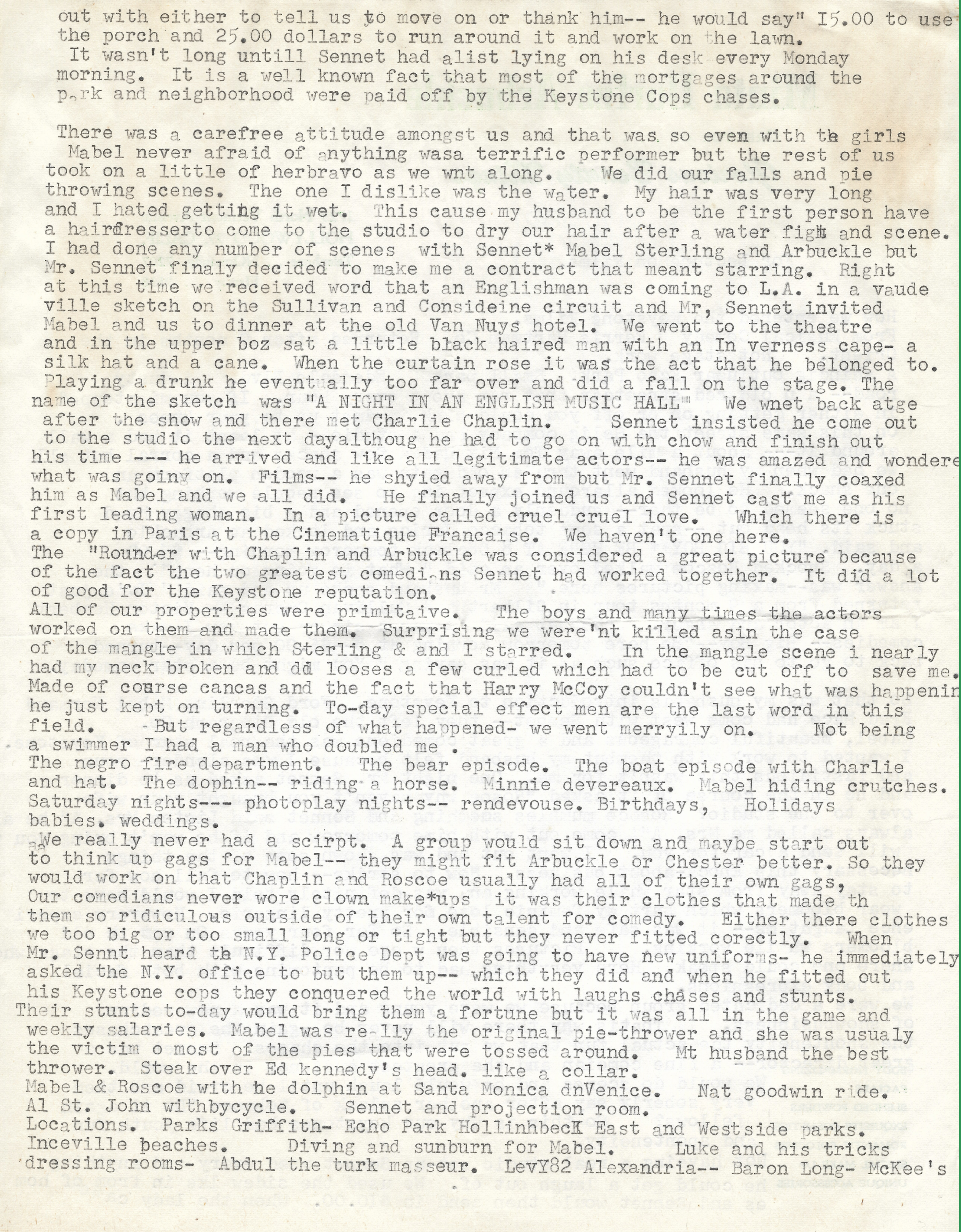


out with either to tell us to move on or thank him-- he would say" I5.00 to use the porch and 25.00 dollars to run around it and work on the lawn.

It wasn't long untill Sennet had alist lying on his desk every Monday morning. It is a well known fact that most of the mortgages around the park and neighborhood were paid off by the Keystone Cops chases.

There was a carefree attitude amongst us and that was so even with the girls Mabel never afraid of anything wasa terrific performer but the rest of us took on a little of herbravo as we wnt along. We did our falls and pie throwing scenes. The one I dislike was the water. My hair was very long and I hated getting it wet. This cause my husband to be the first person have a hairdresserto come to the studio to dry our hair after a water fight and scene. I had done any number of scenes with Sennet* Mabel Sterling and Arbuckle but Mr. Sennet finaly decided to make me a contract that meant starring. Right at this time we received word that an Englishman was coming to L.A. in a vaude ville sketch on the Sullivan and Consideine circuit and Mr, Sennet invited Mabel and us to dinner at the old Van Nuys hotel. We went to the theatre and in the upper boz sat a little black haired man with an In verness cape- a silk hat and a cane. When the curtain rose it was the act that he belonged to. Playing a drunk he eventually too far over and did a fall on the stage. The name of the sketch was "A NIGHT IN AN ENGLISH MUSIC HALL"' We wnet back atge after the show and there met Charlie Chaplin. Sennet insisted he come out to the studio the next dayalthoug he had to go on with chow and finish out his time --- he arrived and like all legitimate actors-- he was amazed and wondere what was goiny on. Films-- he shyied away from but Mr. Sennet finally coaxed him as Mabel and we all did. He finally joined us and Sennet cast me as his first leading woman. In a picture called cruel cruel love. Which there is a copy in Paris at the Cinematique Francaise. We haven't one here.

The "Rounder with Chaplin and Arbuckle was considered a great picture because of the fact the two greatest comedians Sennet had worked together. It did a lot of good for the Keystone reputation.

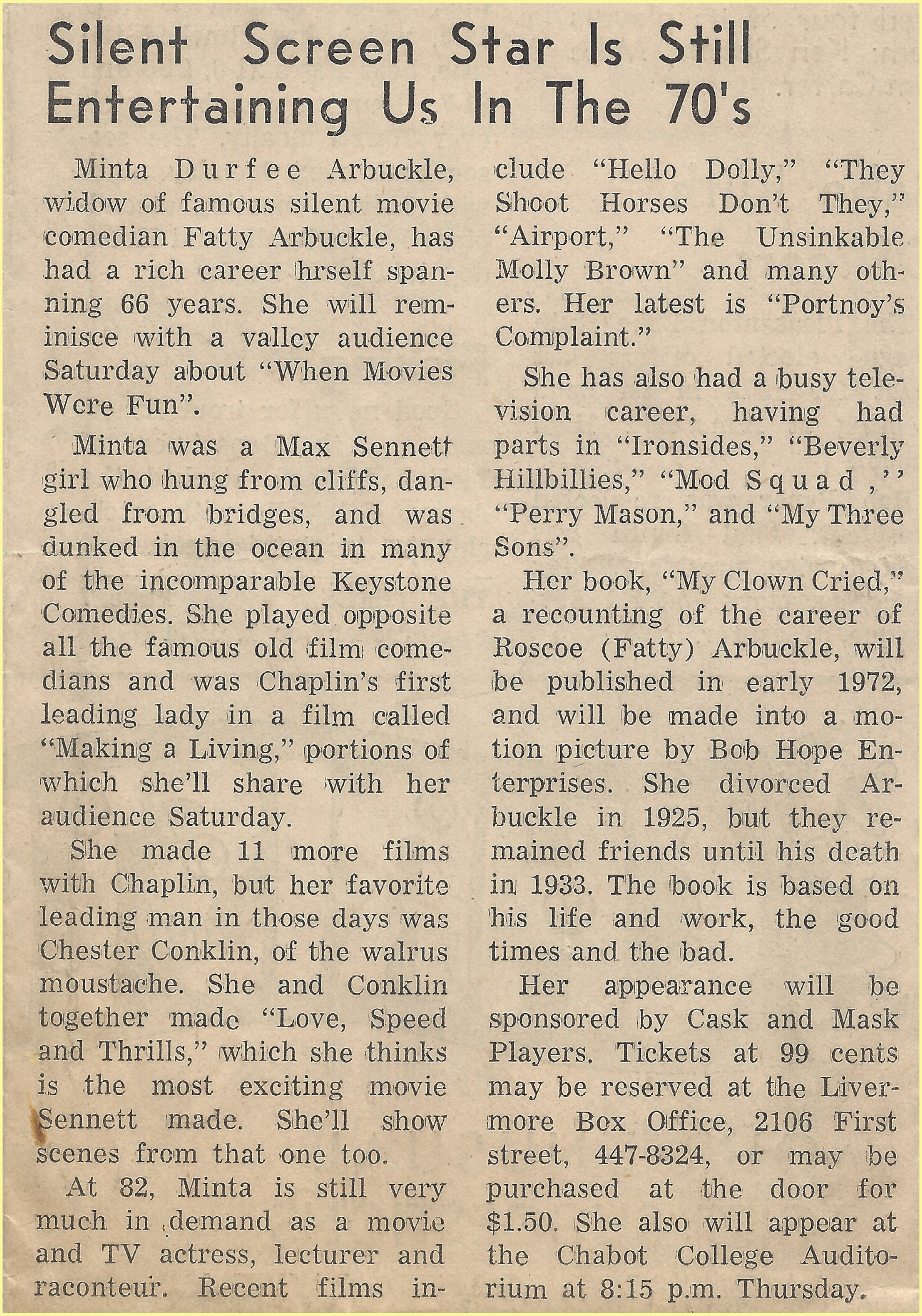
All of our properties were primitaive. The boys and many times the actors worked on them and made them. Surprising we were'nt killed asin the case of the mangle in which Sterling & and I starred. In the mangle scene i nearly had my neck broken and dd looses a few curled which had to be cut off to save me. Made of course cancas and the fact that Harry McCoy couldn't see what was happenin he just kept on turning. To-day special effect men are the last word in this field. But regardless of what happened- we went merryily on. Not being a swimmer I had a man who doubled me .

The negro fire department. The bear episode. The boat episode with Charlie and hat. The dophin-- riding a horse. Minnie devereaux. Mabel hiding crutches. Saturday nights--- photoplay nights-- rendevouse. Birthdays, Holidays babies. weddings.

We really never had a scirpt. A group would sit down and maybe start out to think up gags for Mabel-- they might fit Arbuckle or Chester better. So they would work on that Chaplin and Roscoe usually had all of their own gags, Our comedians never wore clown make*ups it was their clothes that made th them so ridiculous outside of their own talent for comedy. Either there clothes we too big or too small long or tight but they never fitted corectly. When Mr. Sennt heard th N.Y. Police Dept was going to have new uniforms- he immediately asked the N.Y. office to but them up-- which they did and when he fitted out his Keystone cops they conquered the world with laughs chases and stunts.

Their stunts to-day would bring them a fortune but it was all in the game and weekly salaries. Mabel was re-lly the original pie-thrower and she was usualy the victim o most of the pies that were tossed around. Mt husband the best thrower. Steak over Ed kennedy's head. like a collar.

Mabel & Roscoe with he dolphin at Santa Monica dnVenice. Nat goodwin ride.
Al St. John withbycycle. Sennet and projection room.
Locations. Parks Griffith- Echo Park HollinhbecK East and Westside parks.
Inceville beaches. Diving and sunburn for Mabel. Luke and his tricks
dressing rooms- Abdul the turk masseur. LevY82 Alexandria-- Baron Long- McKee's



Silent Screen Star Is Still Entertaining Us In The 70's

Minta Durfee Arbuckle, widow of famous silent movie comedian Fatty Arbuckle, has had a rich career hrself spanning 66 years. She will reminisce with a valley audience Saturday about "When Movies Were Fun".

Minta was a Max Sennett girl who hung from cliffs, dangled from bridges, and was dunked in the ocean in many of the incomparable Keystone Comedies. She played opposite all the famous old film comedians and was Chaplin's first leading lady in a film called "Making a Living," portions of which she'll share with her audience Saturday.

She made 11 more films with Chaplin, but her favorite leading man in those days was Chester Conklin, of the walrus moustache. She and Conklin together made "Love, Speed and Thrills," which she thinks is the most exciting movie Sennett made. She'll show scenes from that one too.

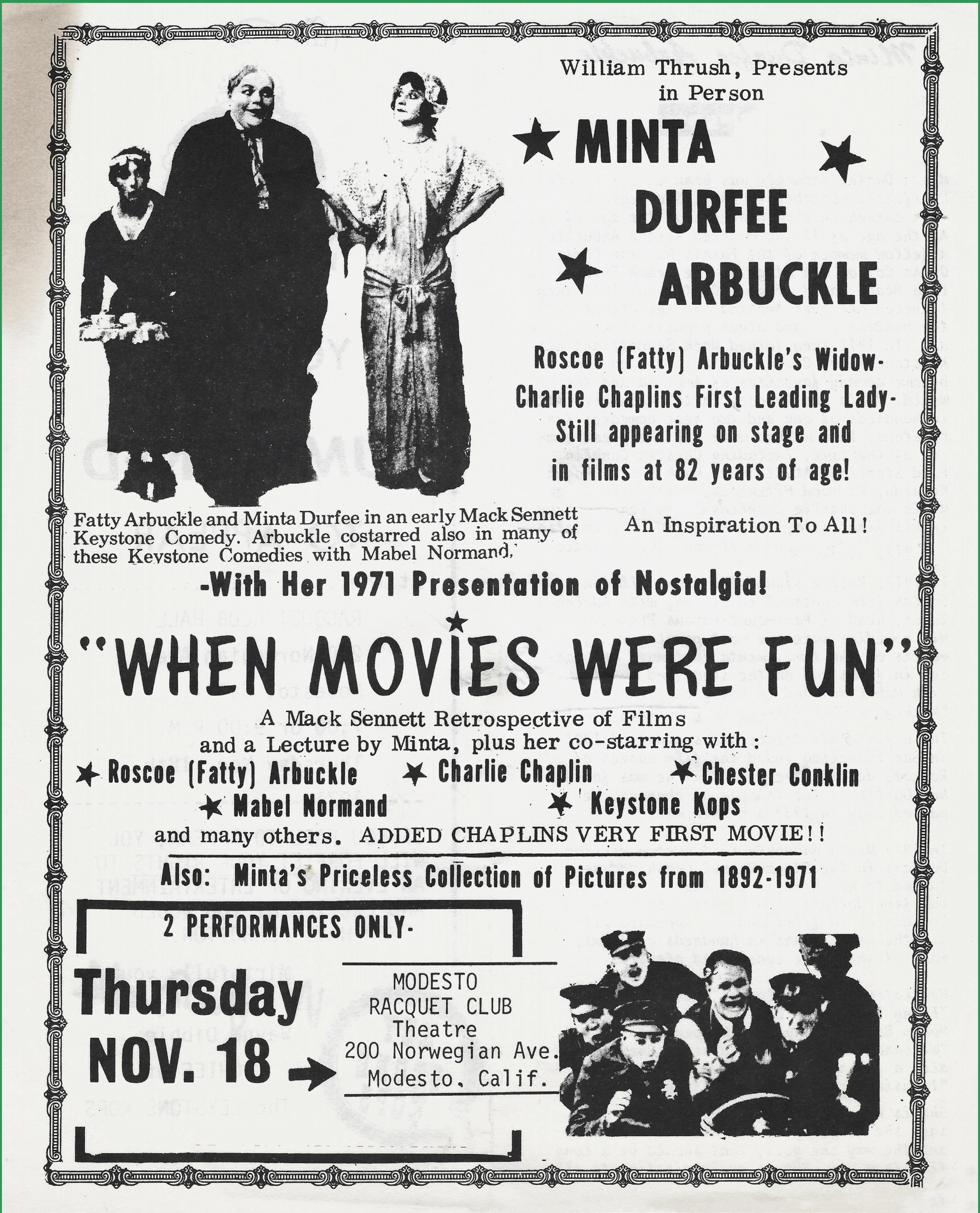
At 82, Minta is still very much in demand as a movie and TV actress, lecturer and raconteur. Recent films include "Hello Dolly," "They Shoot Horses Don't They," "Airport," "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" and many others. Her latest is "Portnoy's Complaint."

She has also had a busy television career, having had parts in "Ironsides," "Beverly Hillbillies," "Mod Squad," "Perry Mason," and "My Three Sons".

Her book, "My Clown Cried," a recounting of the career of Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, will be published in early 1972, and will be made into a motion picture by Bob Hope Enterprises. She divorced Arbuckle in 1925, but they remained friends until his death in 1933. The book is based on his life and work, the good times and the bad.

Her appearance will be sponsored by Cask and Mask Players. Tickets at 99 cents may be reserved at the Livermore Box Office, 2106 First street, 447-8324, or may be purchased at the door for $1.50. She also will appear at the Chabot College Auditorium at 8:15 p.m. Thursday.

Undated clipping from Minta's personal collection



William Thrush, Presents
in Person

★ MINTA ★ DURFEE ★ ARBUCKLE

Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle's Widow-
Charlie Chaplins First Leading Lady-
Still appearing on stage and
in films at 82 years of age!

An Inspiration To All!

Fatty Arbuckle and Minta Durfee in an early Mack Sennett Keystone Comedy. Arbuckle costarred also in many of these Keystone Comedies with Mabel Normand.

-With Her 1971 Presentation of Nostalgia!

"WHEN MOVIES WERE FUN"

A Mack Sennett Retrospective of Films
and a Lecture by Minta, plus her co-starring with:

★ **Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle** ★ **Charlie Chaplin** ★ **Chester Conklin**
★ **Mabel Normand** ★ **Keystone Kops**

and many others. ADDED CHAPLINS VERY FIRST MOVIE!!

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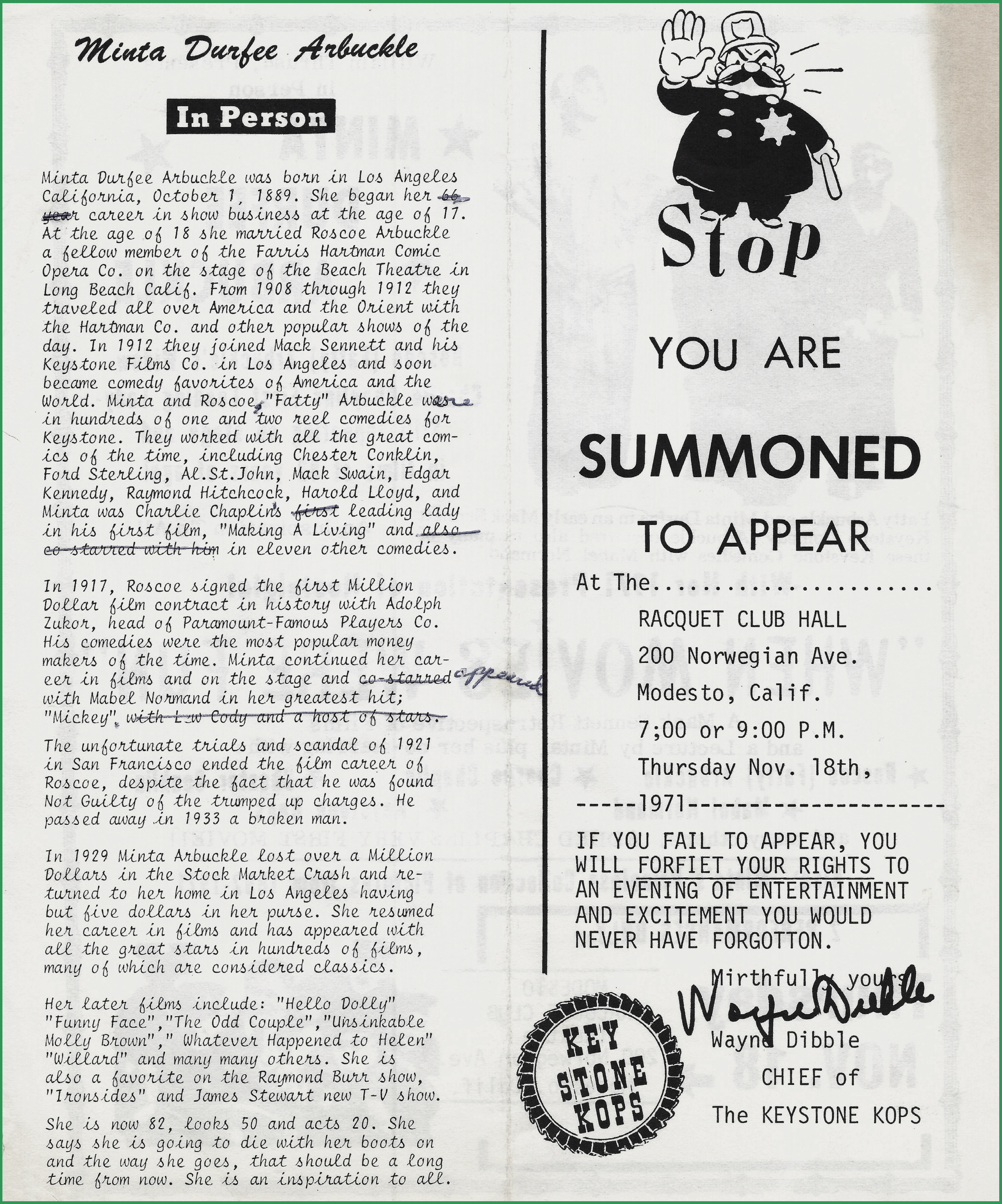

Minta Durfee Arbuckle

In Person

Minta Durfee Arbuckle was born in Los Angeles California, October 1, 1889. She began her ~~66 year~~ career in show business at the age of 17. At the age of 18 she married Roscoe Arbuckle a fellow member of the Farris Hartman Comic Opera Co. on the stage of the Beach Theatre in Long Beach Calif. From 1908 through 1912 they traveled all over America and the Orient with the Hartman Co. and other popular shows of the day. In 1912 they joined Mack Sennett and his Keystone Films Co. in Los Angeles and soon became comedy favorites of America and the World. Minta and Roscoe, "Fatty" Arbuckle w~~as~~re in hundreds of one and two reel comedies for Keystone. They worked with all the great comics of the time, including Chester Conklin, Ford Sterling, Al.St.John, Mack Swain, Edgar Kennedy, Raymond Hitchcock, Harold Lloyd, and Minta was Charlie Chaplin's ~~first~~ leading lady in his first film, "Making A Living" and ~~also co-starred with him~~ in eleven other comedies.

In 1917, Roscoe signed the first Million Dollar film contract in history with Adolph Zukor, head of Paramount-Famous Players Co. His comedies were the most popular money makers of the time. Minta continued her career in films and on the stage and ~~co-starred~~ appeared with Mabel Normand in her greatest hit; "Mickey". ~~with Lew Cody and a host of stars.~~

The unfortunate trials and scandal of 1921 in San Francisco ended the film career of Roscoe, despite the fact that he was found Not Guilty of the trumped up charges. He passed away in 1933 a broken man.

In 1929 Minta Arbuckle lost over a Million Dollars in the Stock Market Crash and returned to her home in Los Angeles having but five dollars in her purse. She resumed her career in films and has appeared with all the great stars in hundreds of films, many of which are considered classics.

Her later films include: "Hello Dolly" "Funny Face","The Odd Couple","Unsinkable Molly Brown"," Whatever Happened to Helen" "Willard" and many many others. She is also a favorite on the Raymond Burr show, "Ironsides" and James Stewart new T-V show.

She is now 82, looks 50 and acts 20. She says she is going to die with her boots on and the way she goes, that should be a long time from now. She is an inspiration to all.

Stop

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Modesto, Calif.

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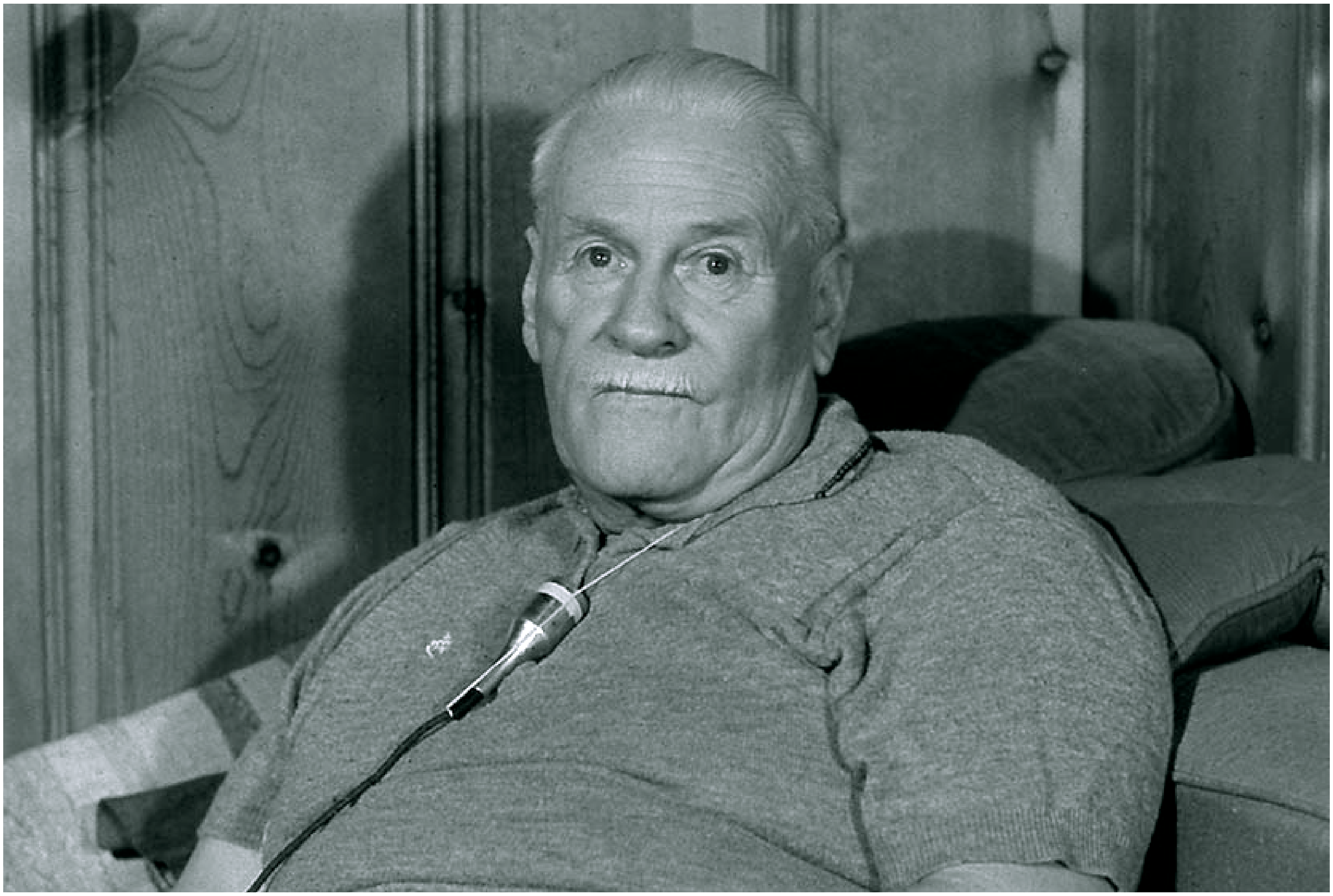
VERNON DENT SPEAKS

Now Blind, Picture Actor Recalls Old Cinema Days



Vernon Dent, ca. 1957

by Alice Morse

Pie in the sky had nothing on pie-in-the-face, a necessary ingredient in the recipe for fun cooked up and served hot with saucy laughs under the name of Comedy in the early, early days of the movie industry.

One of those who always managed to duck in time, is Vernon Dent, whose memories of those wacky, slapsie funnies of the silents always seem to quicken once a new year gets up steam.

And it's that way this new 1962 as the old friends who always start the year off right once again jingle the phone and ring the doorbell to begin old reminiscences before the latch even clicks behind them.

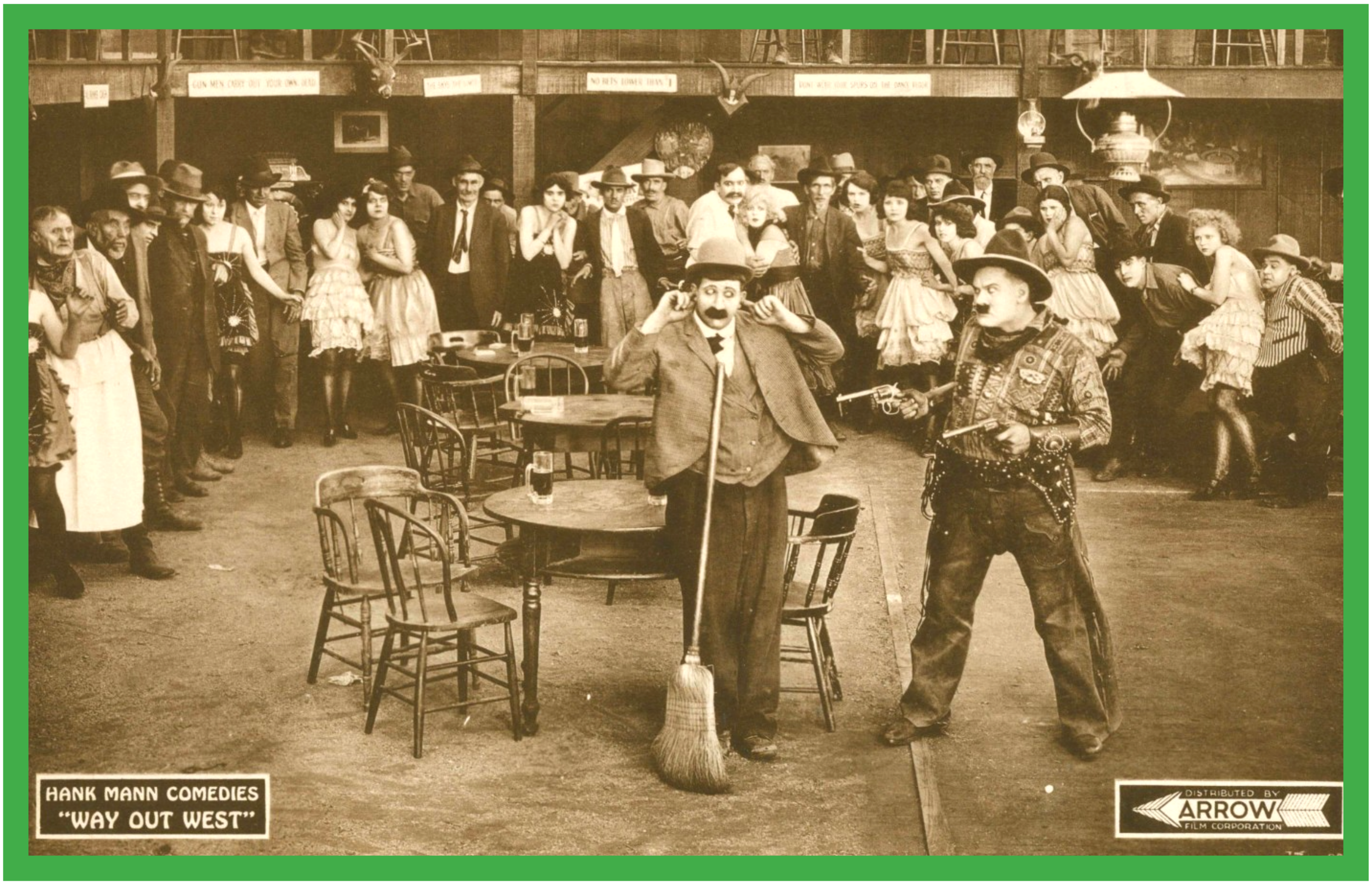
Graying Actor Accepted

Memories stir, forgotten anecdotes are dug up and the great and wonderful days of real old time movies come into focus.

For all, that is, except the graying, good-looking "heavy" living now in Van Nuys.

Blind for eight years, Vernon Dent gives only an impatient few minutes to his tragic affliction, then is off with the old spark on another anecdote, another story about the actors, the films, the early day production tricks and his own years as a part of it.

"Following World I [sic] when I was a paymaster in the naval service," Dent said, "I found myself



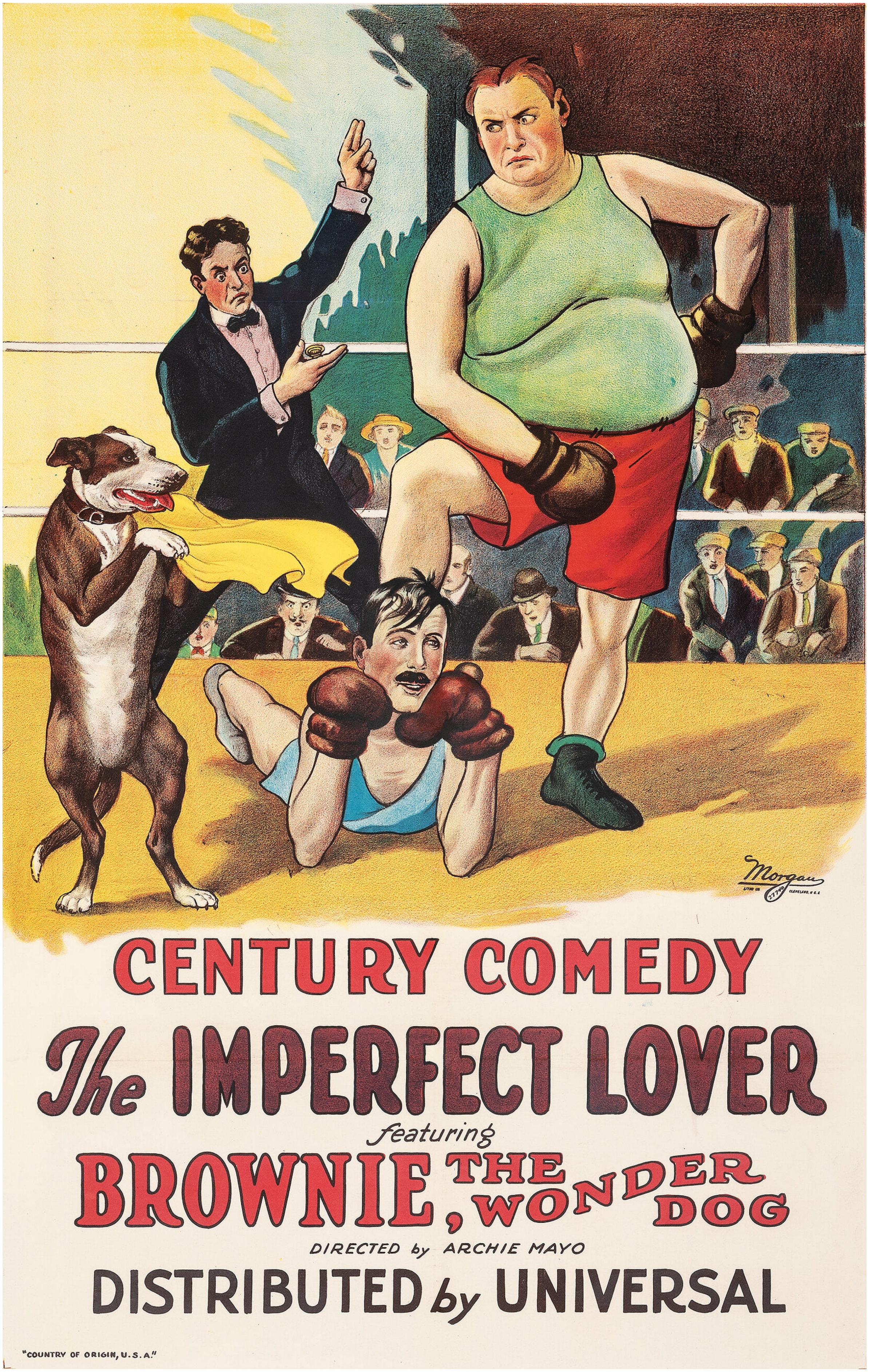
at the popular Jewel City Cafe in Seal Beach in a trio. There was Harry Highsmith and Fred Bell — both names to remember — and I sang baritone."

This was the spot, the actor added, that Mable [sic] Normand, Fatty Arbuckle, Harold Lloyd and Bebe Daniels used to frequent and "many are the big names of today which used to compete down there for the nightly dance prizes!"

Played Comedy — Heavy

Among the onlookers was Hank Mann, one of the original Keystone Cops and it was he who gave Dent the break to do films.

"I was the heavy in this Hank Mann series of slapstick, then found myself in my own series called the "Vernon Dent Comedies," featurin [sic] the teenager Duane Thompson."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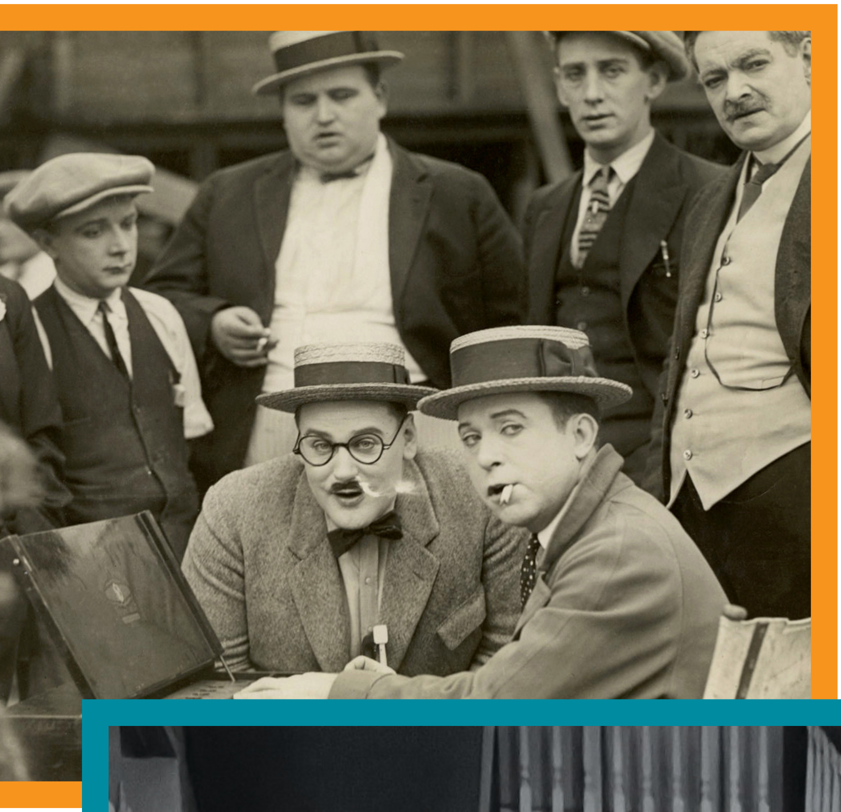
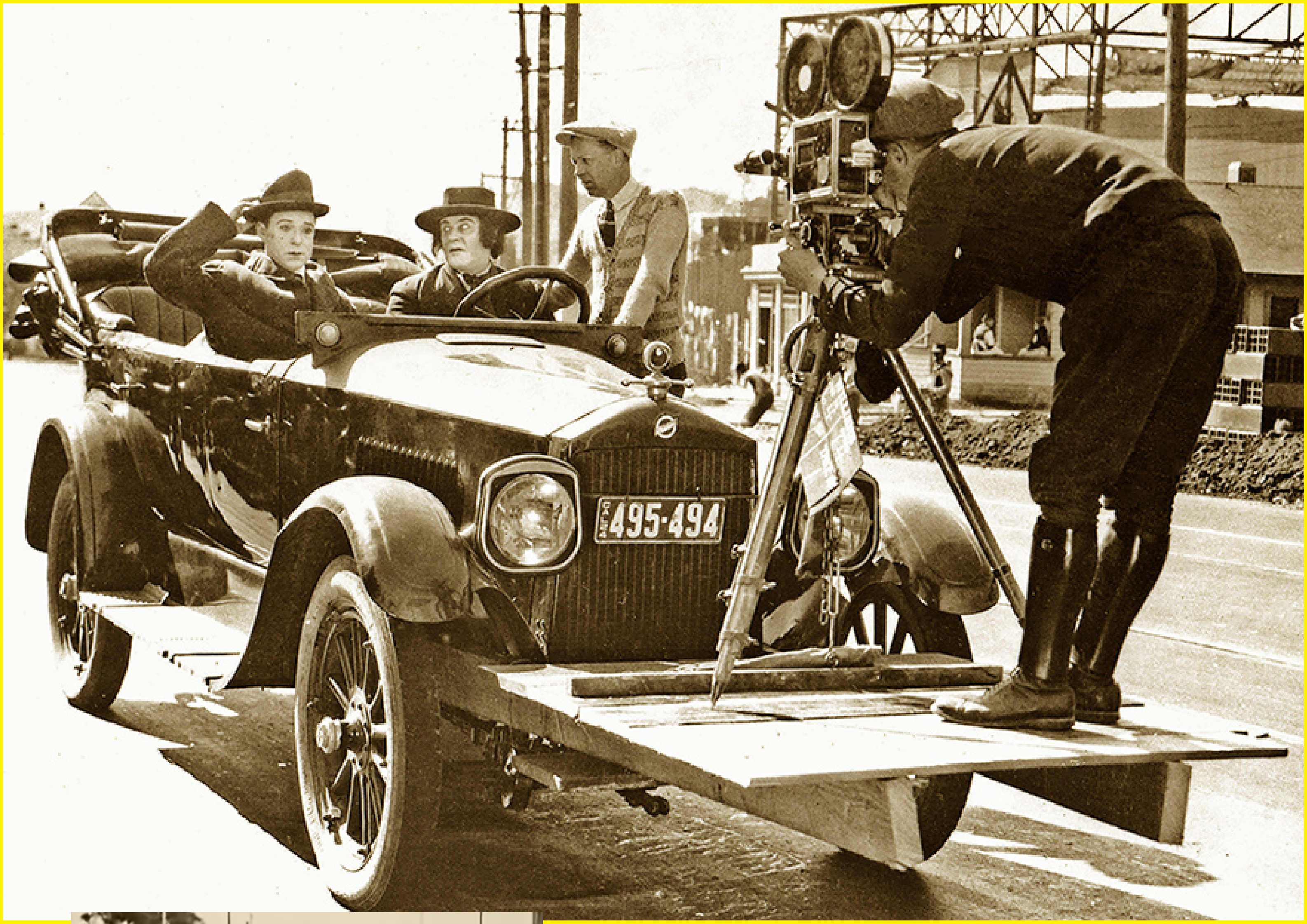


From here he went with Thomas Ince, playing a comedy-heavy in "Hail the Woman," with Florence Vidor, Theodore Roberts, Madge Bellamy and Tully Marshall.

The years following saw Dent working for Mack Sennett, never in the famous "Cops" series but doing slapstick nevertheless. Films with Andy Clyde and Bill [sic] Bevan, Harry Langdon, Chester Conklin and others used up another nine years.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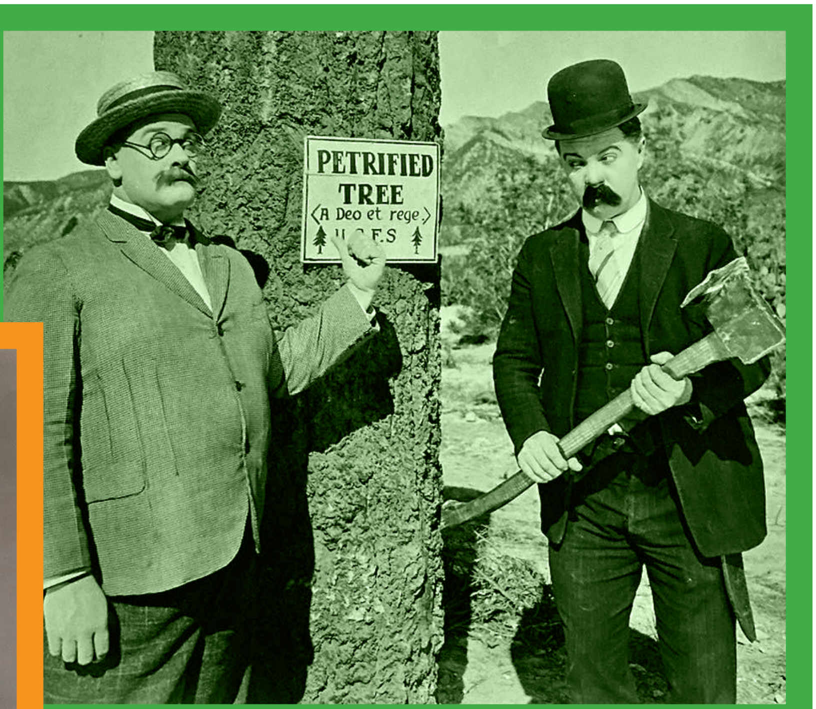
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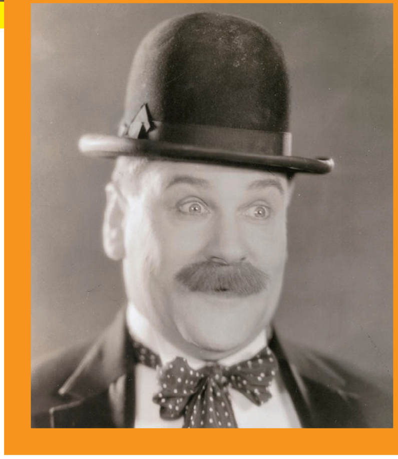

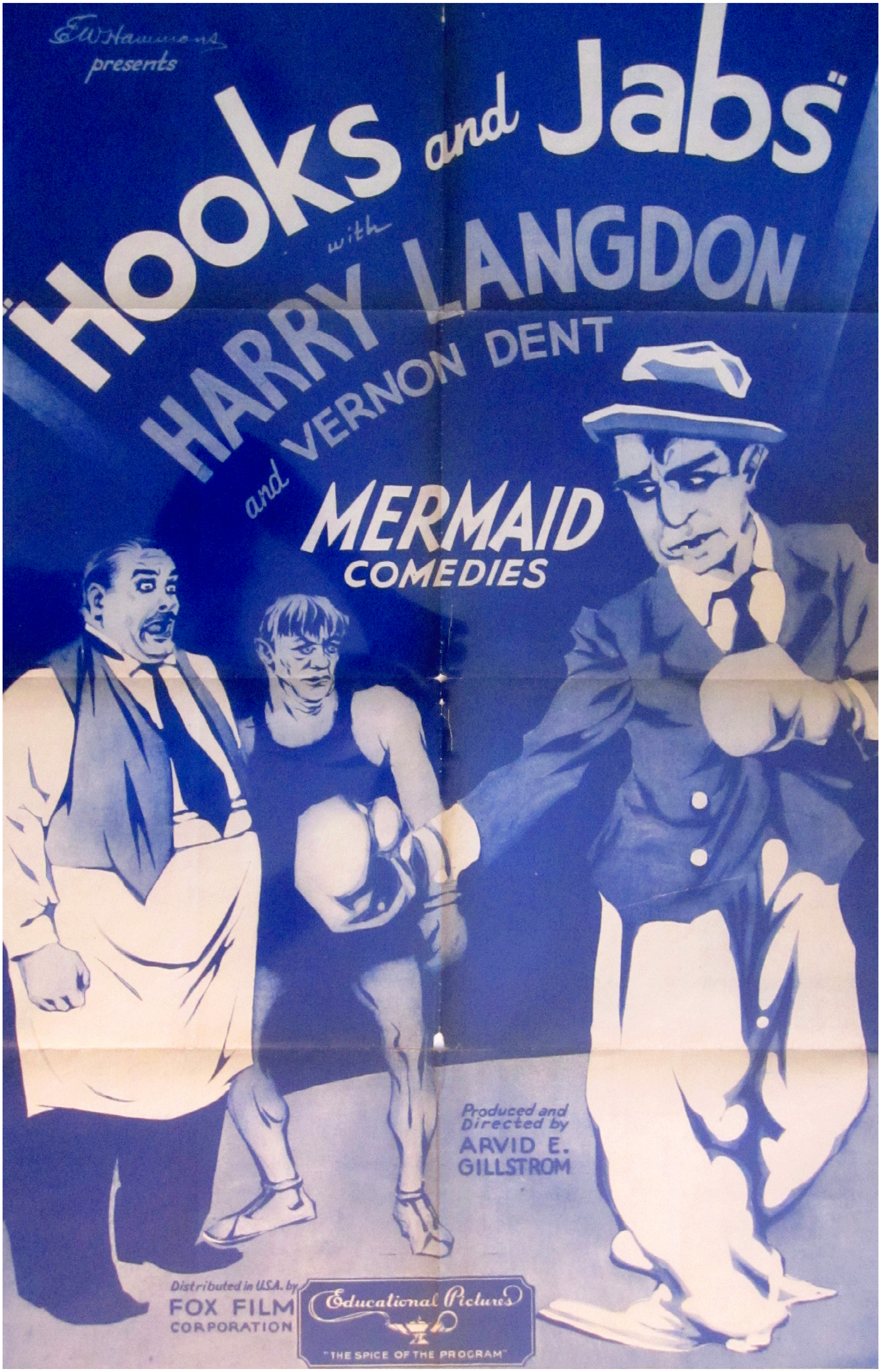
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Produced and
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ARVID E.
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FOX FILM
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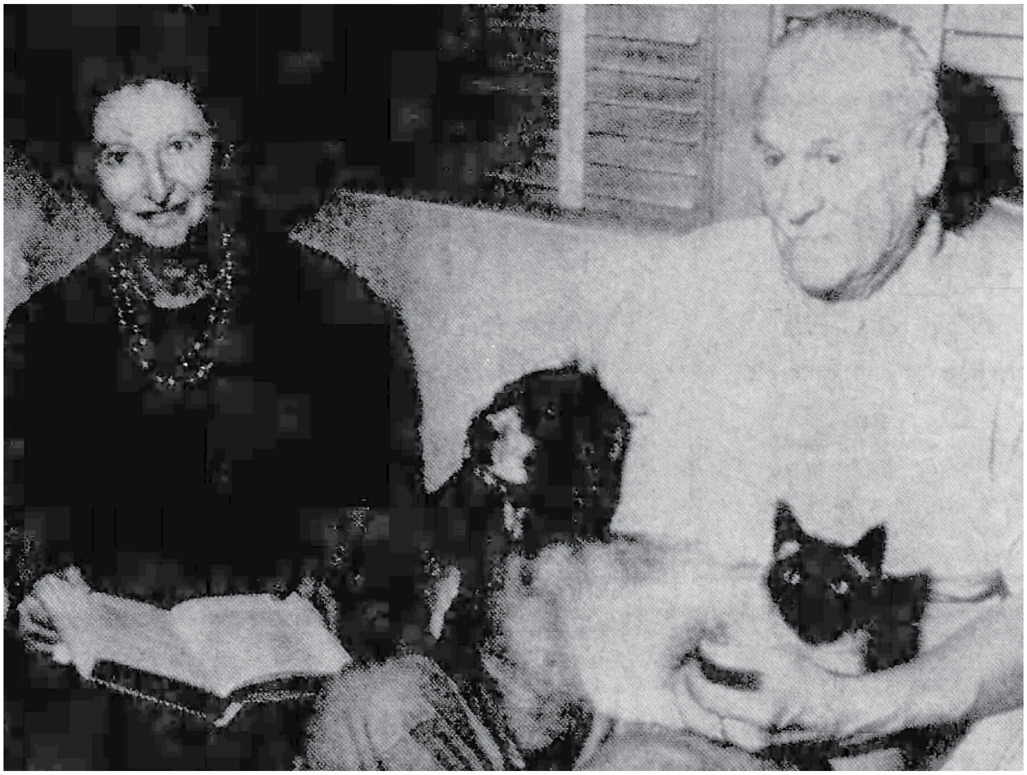
Educational Pictures
"THE SPICE OF THE PROGRAM"

Worked Long Sessions

"It seems so very, very long ago," Dent said, "but I was involved at one time in writing for Bing Crosby, and at another with Jules White at Columbia where for 17 years I did comedy heavies and straight comedy …. A long time, when you remember all the ground you've covered.."

Of the old days: "We used to start work at 8:30 in the morning, quit at 6 for dinner, then start a whole new picture after supper and work till midnight!"

Dent recalls that the lovely Carole Lombard started with him and Langdon at the old Mack Sennett Studios. He remembers, too, that Republic Studios was originally the Sennett Studios and he recalls with affection that Langdon and his wife stood up at his and Eunice's wedding in Santa Barbara 24 years ago.



"Little Pigeon" the dog, "Googie" the cat settle down for comfortable evening with Eunice, Vernon Dent of Van Nuys. Dent, well known for long career in pictures and as star of own "Vernon Dent Comedies," is retired, lives at 6432 Peach Ave. Actor's career began following World War I in which he was in paymaster's department of Navy.

Occupied During Day

Other memories are in every corner of the family home at 6432 Peach Ave., Van Nuys, along with "Googie" the Siamese, and the two cockers "Ginger" and "Pigeon."

Warm and affectionate company for the blind, 66-year-old actor, during the hours Eunice heads the escrow department at Security First National's Sun Valley branch.

One of the dogs is of especial comfort to Vernon. Little Pigeon, too, lives in darkness.

Originally published in The Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet, 11 January 1962

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TEN MINUTES OF MIRTH: ALLEN CURTIS AND HIS JOKER COMEDIES

1913 – 1917

THOMAS REEDER

Joker Comedies: They were Universal's answer to the stunning popularity of Mack Sennett's Keystone Comedies, introduced in late 1912 to enthusiastic audience acceptance. Universal had found the right man to develop and nurture its new Joker brand, the versatile and extremely talented fellow named Allen Curtis.

The Joker Comedies were good – *really* good – and it didn't take long before Sennett noticed. Louise Fazenda, Bobby Vernon, and Harry McCoy, three of Joker's most popular comedians, were all lured away within a year of Joker's inception. Unfazed by this loss, Curtis regrouped and formed a talented new stock company every bit as good as their predecessors. Headlined by Max Asher, Gale Henry, and Billy Franey, with support from Milburn Morante, Lillian Peacock, and Charles "Heinie" Conklin, the new Jokers would soldier on with their delightfully unhinged antics right up until the company closed its doors at the end of 1917.

Allen Curtis, the creative entity behind the Jokers, was ringmaster of this zany assemblage of comedians. A veteran of more than a decade of non-stop performances throughout the Midwest and West, his Allen Curtis Musical Comedy troupe enjoyed widespread popularity. During Joker's four-year run, the indefatigable Curtis would (co-)write and direct more than 250 single-reel shorts, an output of well over a film per week, the quality of his films surprisingly consistent.

Thomas Reeder's *Ten Minutes Of Mirth* provides an entertaining account of the Joker Comedies and the multi-talented man behind them, along with a detailed Filmography of the brand's entire output. Lavishly illustrated with more than 200 rare photos. Available from the publisher, split-reel.com (free shipping), or at Amazon. Hardcover $55, softcover $45.

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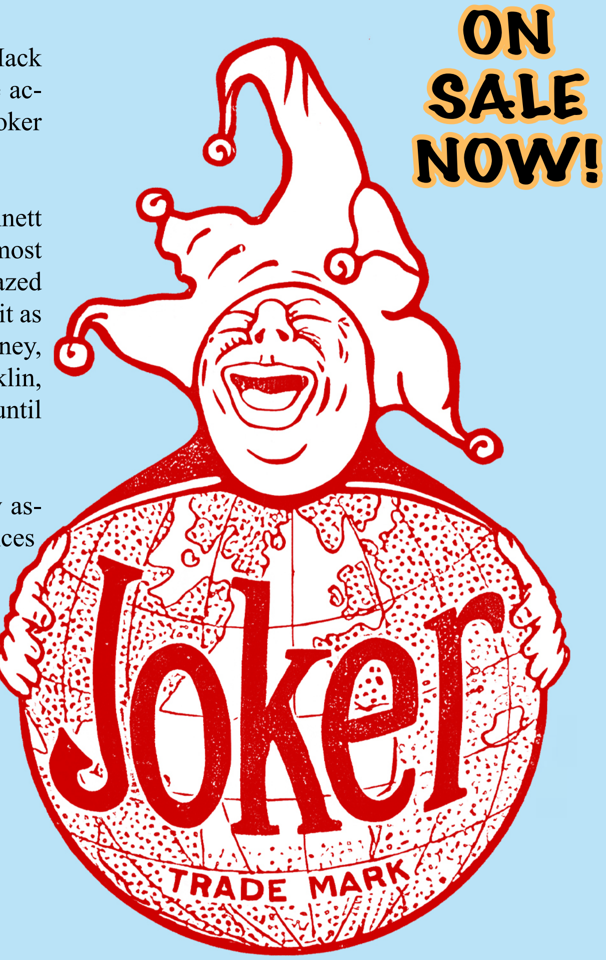
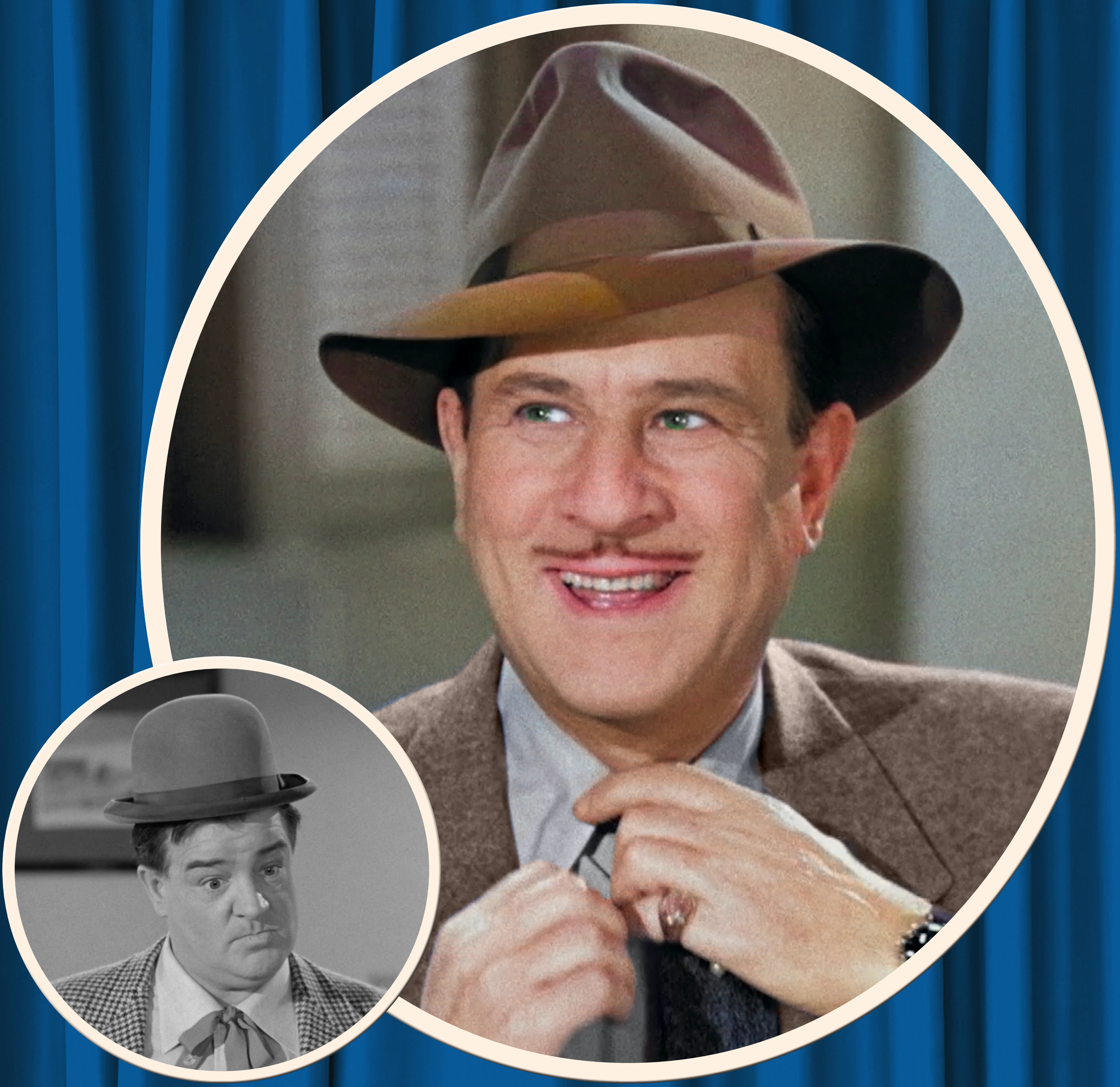




When Bud Was Funnier Than Lou

on The Abbott & Costello Show, Season Two

(with a special nod to Clyde Bruckman)

by Ed Watz

When Bud Was Funnier Than Lou

There's no doubt about it: Lou Costello was a very funny fellow. But let's not forget — so was Bud Abbott! Sure, in their movies Abbott was primarily the straightman of the act — a brilliant straightman, the best in the business — but with few opportunities to put a joke across and make it his own. In the team's feature films, the (often flimsy) storyline would grind to a halt as focus shifted to a comedy routine that had nothing to do with the plot. In those high spots, one of three things usually happened: either A) Lou dominates the shenanigans; B) Bud walks out of the scene early; or, C) Bud isn't in the scene at all! In these earlier times Bud, taller than Lou, seemingly thin as a rail (get a load of him wearing the titular garment in *Pardon My Sarong*), sporting a Hollywood leading man's toupee and often looking more suave and stern than comical (at least he's described as "hatchet-faced" in one 1940s picture), nevertheless consistently proves a brilliant feed with impeccable timing, furnishing Lou with the laughs.

In "The Bank Holdup," Bud knows an advertising opportunity when he sees one...

...and pins it on Lou.

Bud's priceless reaction when he realizes the description of the two bank robbers fits partner Lou and himself.

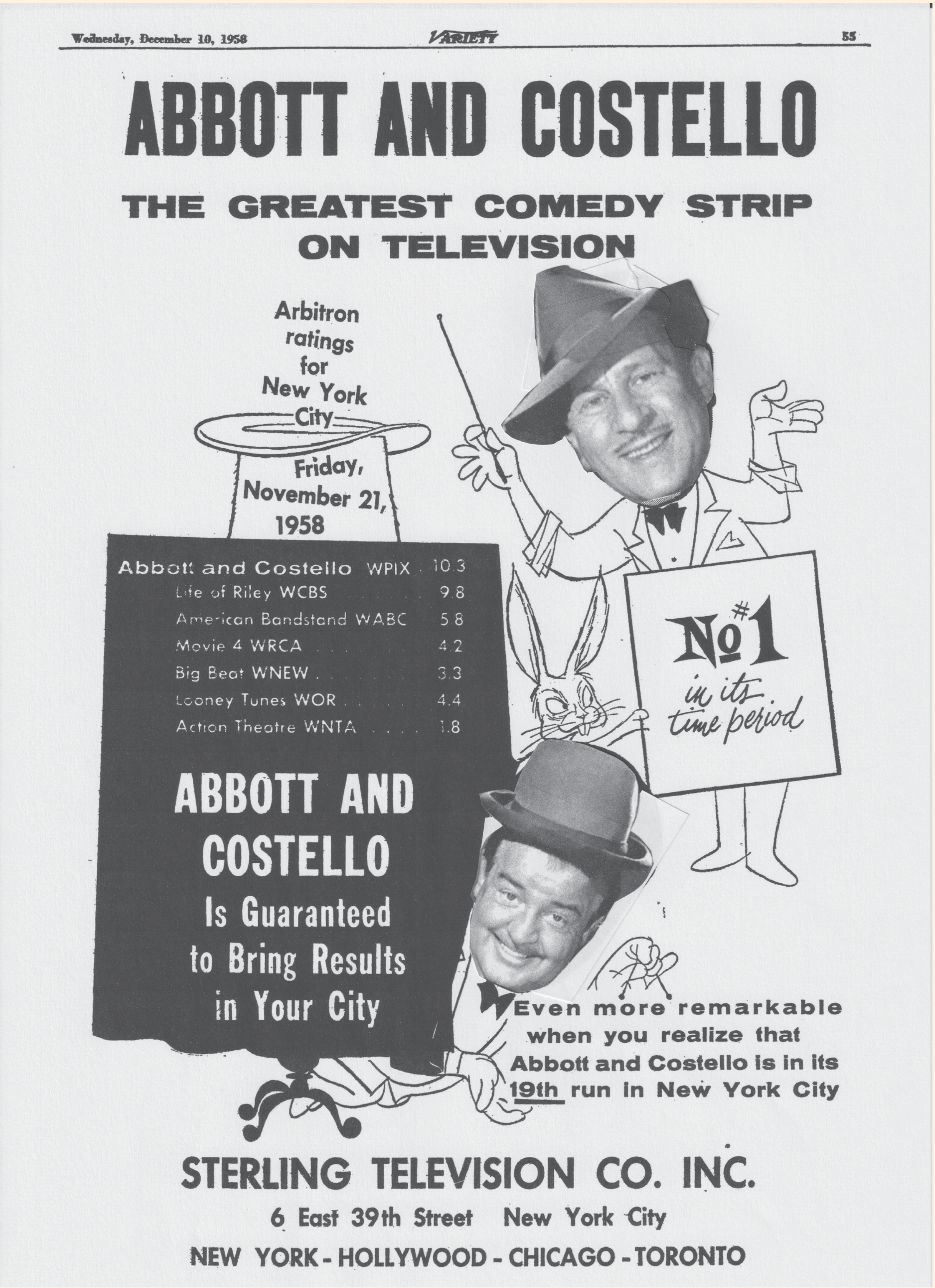
Bud Abbott's skill at putting a joke over was second-to-none, but he's setting up those jokes for Costello's punchlines. In their movies Bud is seldom permitted to be funny himself. It's mostly Lou who's allowed to dominate the camera in close-ups with his double-take reactions. And it's Lou who breaks the fourth wall conspiratorially with the audience, not Bud. In these films, Bud's one-dimensional character — the face-slapping bully — is practically a sociopath with no regard for his gullible and childlike "friend." The most obvious example of this trait, again from *Pardon My Sarong*, is where Abbott gives Costello a gun and implies it's better for all if Lou commits suicide! No wonder studio "interviews" from this period suggested that many kids wanted to kick the real-life Bud Abbott in the shins. I doubt the claim made in Universal's press releases, where supposedly Abbott says he's happy when children express their hatred of him, because that's proof he's "doing his job right!"

But I digress.

Okay, I have a confession to make: while I love Abbott & Costello, most of their full-length features aren't favorites of mine (*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* is an obvious exception to the rule; it's the perfect horror-comedy in a class by itself). Growing up, I just wasn't keen about Bud and Lou's loud and brassy 1940s movies, particularly the ones made when Abbott & Costello first became Hollywood's hottest comedy duo since, well, Laurel & Hardy. On the other hand, Bud and Lou's TV show was consistently much funnier than these often indifferent, meandering movies. It was refreshing to learn I'm not the only one who feels this way.

"On television [Andy Kaufman] has seen Abbott and Costello between 50 and 100 times. 'Their situation comedy, not their movies,' Andy said of Abbott and Costello. 'They have about 50 of them made. And they're the greatest!'" — New York Magazine, September 1978.

Pioneering and often provocative, the late Andy Kaufman was awestruck by *The Abbott & Costello Show*. Today, almost 50 years after Andy's testimonial, Jerry Seinfeld continues to express his deep admiration for Bud and Lou's half-hour series. "To me," Jerry explained, *The Abbott & Costello Show* "brought a simplicity to comedy. No romantic subplots, no big musical numbers...They were just being funny." For myself, after all these years, having watched the gamut of sitcoms



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

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Arbitron ratings for New York City

Friday, November 21, 1958

Abbott and Costello	**WPIX**	**10.3**
Life of Riley	WCBS	9.8
American Bandstand	WABC	5.8
Movie 4	WRCA	4.2
Big Beat	WNEW	3.3
Looney Tunes	WOR	4.4
Action Theatre	WNTA	1.8

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At the end of 1958 The Abbott & Costello Show was still a powerhouse attraction, finishing its 19th run on WPIX-NY. The show would stick around that station for an additional 160 repeats (note: the headshot photos were replaced here due to poor image quality of the originals) from *I Love Lucy* to the final season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The Abbott & Costello Show* remains my all-time favorite TV comedy series. But when it comes to a discussion about most of those A&C feature films — I'd rather watch Wheeler & Woolsey!

Before some Lou Costello fanboy sends a couple "wise guys" from Paterson over to see me, let's put this in perspective — my perspective. I grew up watching *The Abbott & Costello Show* long before their feature films became a weekly attraction on television. Starting in my 1960s Brooklyn childhood, I was hooked on these great comedians when our local station WPIX-NY ran Laurel & Hardy, The Three Stooges, and *The A&C Show* weekday afternoons. Good things came to an end, however: The Stooges were pulled from New York airwaves on May 1, 1970, when WPIX caved to parental pressure groups that branded Moe, Larry, Curly and Shemp as too violent for children. Laurel & Hardy likewise vanished from New York TV but for no given reason (perhaps those same parents who disapproved of the Stooges also witnessed Babe Hardy receiving an oh-so-rare eye-poke from Stanley?). Despite these losses, *The Abbott & Costello Show* soldiered on alone. Its time slot often changed through ensuing years, and by the 1980s it was relegated to the ungodly pre-dawn niche of 4:30am. Clearly somebody at WPIX (besides us faithful fans) also loved Bud and Lou's series. (That's either the reason, or perhaps some higher-ups realized that Abbott and Costello had never indulged in eye-gouging. Face-slapping, yes, eye-gouging, no!) Whatever the cause, *The A & C Show*'s constant presence in my life literally extended from pre-school into young-adult college days.

It wasn't until years later that I got to see all of the team's feature-length movies, which presented the boys in a different light from their TV series. But "Abbott and Costello" in features behaved like alien characters compared to the "Bud and Lou" that I knew. For me, that feature film duo churning out films by the carload at Universal were not nearly as much fun to watch. I viewed the films, but too many of them seemed forced for laughs, and after a few introductory routines and the inclusion of a love story and/or musical guest artists, they often became a chore to sit through as I waited for that mandatory rear-screen "chase-performed-by-stuntmen" finale.

Who needs a Moviola? Bud and Lou view the rushes from their TV show (1953).

In "The Beauty Contest," Mr. Fields' man-hungry niece Columbine has her designs set on Abbott.

Bud: "Are you engaged?"
Columbine: "Uh-uh. ARE YOU?"
Bud: "I intend to be!"

In "Cheap Skates," Dumbbell Mike The Cop accidentally captures some crooks.

Mike: "I'll get a promotion for this!"

Bud: "Yeah, they're liable to make you a policeman."

Around the time I graduated and got my first full-time job, home video recorders were becoming affordable and very popular. Bud and Lou's TV show wasn't for sale on videocassettes, so I'd set my VCR timer to capture *The A&C Show*, situated in that red-eye time slot better suited for the likes of Modern Farmer. Bud and Lou's adventures were sandwiched between commercials for Chia Pets, Popeil Potato Peelers, huckster accident lawyers and caffeinated pitchmen promoting thick healthy hair, but nevertheless, the team's 30-year-old program was still in the running. In no time at all — three months, tops! — I collected my own set of all 52 episodes. The series continued to be shown on New York TV well into the 1980s and incredibly, on the same station where I first discovered them. In 1975 author Jim Mulholland wrote that "It was recently estimated that WPIX-TV in New York reran each episode one hundred and twenty times!" That figure was probably closer to one hundred and eighty reruns by the time the original syndicated set of 16mm prints were retired in the mid-1980s. Station WOR picked up the series next and

on the A&C Show, Season Two

Bud gives a rare and beautifully executed triple-take when he realizes the boxcar they've been trapped in brought them 2,300 miles back to Detroit in "Car Trouble."

began showing new video transfers. Although the shows were slightly time-compressed, they were unedited, and the quality and detail were a treat to watch after years of grainy, increasingly splicy old film prints.

Fast-forward to the present day — and something better has revitalized — even revolutionized — this classic series. The 3-D Film Archive's Bob Furmanek and Jack Theakston, both leading film historians and friends of classic comedy, have crafted magnificent restorations of the entire run of *The Abbott & Costello Show*, with Season Two debuting this past year. To boost the second season up to its full-unfettered glory, Bob and Jack meticulously scanned over 120,000 feet of original 35mm camera negative on 156 reels frame by frame, and in 4K resolution. It took a full year to complete this enormous task but the resultant image and sound quality, Bob reported, "is absolutely fantastic, even on a ten-foot screen." I can attest that both Seasons One and Two are absolutely stunning, and after a lifetime of watching these episodes, the brand-new A&C restorations are a revelation to behold.

Noted film historian Matthew Coniam is the author of an outstanding series of books, movie-related and otherwise. In *The Annotated Abbott & Costello* (McFarland & Company, 2023), Matthew writes about *The A&C Show*, astutely observing that "season one had been a loosely assembled, virtually plot less grab-bag of their greatest hits, but the second season is different. These episodes are carefully constructed little plots, with new material and the emphasis on situations; this, and the fact that they are shot on film and come in at about 25 minutes each, makes them to all intents and purposes 26 Abbott & Costello short comedies." He concludes: "As such, the material is often interesting as a reflection of how their act might have developed if they had kept going."

While I enjoy both seasons of Bud and Lou's show, the second season is my particular favorite. A lot of the enjoyment has to do with the revamping, subtle yet considerable, of Bud Abbott's character. Season One captured the team's routines where the time-honored "straightman vs. comedian" rule dominates the action. This of course was always the way Bud and Lou worked in burlesque, on radio, and in their movies. And in Season One, they repeat virtually every burlesque bit from their repertoire, as well as many of the routines written specifically for their films in the forties. BUT — already in the first season fresh ideas abound: Bud is now more than just the straightman, he's finally given his own comedy business, neatly interjected into the traditional happy-go-wacky, slightly insane blackout bits. Bud, who never stood for Costello's childish nonsense in their 1940s movies ("Stop! Behave yourself!"), suddenly becomes a mischievous instigator himself. The comic side of Bud's personality is finally developed, as the following dialogue indicates:

COSTELLO: "Mr. Fields, we're gonna have a party."

LANDLORD: "Oh no, you're not! You're not gonna have a party in this house! The last party you had, your broken-down friends burnt holes in my carpet…why they ruined the place, they wrecked my furniture, it took me two weeks to get the crumbs out of here…"

COSTELLO: "Now wait a minute, there's gonna be no crumbs at this party — "

LANDLORD: "You mean Bud Abbott's folks aren't coming?"

Here's a few of the many examples from Season One where Abbott indulges in the "anything goes" spirit of things:

- When the team goes into their "I must be brave, I must be strong" schtick, Lou begins dancing to the rhythm of the phrase — and suddenly Bud joins in as well!
- Abbott treats cast regular Bingo The Chimp just like a real person: unlike Costello, who's fear of the chimp is always apparent, Abbott takes no monkey business from the ape. Seated at the table alongside Bingo, Bud takes out a cigarette and casually says, "Bingo, gimme a light." When Bingo hesitates to use the cigarette lighter, Bud grabs Bingo's arm and growls as though he's talking to his partner: "Gimme a light!" Whereupon the chimp immediately complies!
- When Bingo takes a bath, Bud looks in and twice cheerfully reminds the chimp, "Don't be like Costello, use soap!"
- Unable to pay for his huge meal in a restaurant, Bud, with a lazy smile of contentment on his face, contemptuously tells the restaurant owner, "I haven't got a dime!" as he stuffs crackers into his coat pockets.
- At the dinner table when Costello asks an overreaching Abbott, "You have a tongue, haven't you?" It's Bud who delivers what would've been a Costello punchline, "Yeah, but I can reach further with my hand!"

And with Season Two, Abbott really cuts loose in the comedy department. It's belated, but it's long overdue: Bud goes through a metamorphosis, his character finally becomes the outright comedian he naturally is, and not just the duo's straightman. He's no longer the cruel and often cowardly tormentor of their movies who sets up Lou as the Fall Guy. Instead, in their TV series Abbott is simply Costello's flat-broke roommate in Sidney Fields' apartment house, and Lou's pal through thick and thin. While Bud still takes advantage of Lou from time to time (similar to other major comedy duos — think of Hardy tricking Laurel, or Woolsey duping Wheeler), generally Costello knows what's going down in advance and reluctantly agrees with Bud's schemes to get them out of a bad situation. No longer is Bud the unsympathetic weasel who throws his partner "under the bus" at every mishap. As a result, in these half-hour episodes Abbott is not only very likable, he's very relatable, having to deal with the calamities caused by his simple-minded but good-natured buddy. I wrote for Matthew Coniam that it's true there's none of the team's verbal routines included at this late date, "but you can find that wordplay in dozens of their films (and seriously, do we need yet another elucidation on why mustard was made for the hotdog, or that 7 goes into 28 thirteen times? I think not.)"

Bud and Lou now handle the storylines together and share in the laughs equally. As Matthew stated, these later episodes are the closest thing to two-reel comedies that Abbott & Costello would ever make. Finally, Bud and Lou are partners as a team and partners in the show's comedy business. Plus, Bud is given a dynamic twist to his screen personality. Abbott's role as the eternally hopeful con man is greatly expanded with his own comic business. This new emphasis on Bud as a fully developed comedy character opens up a whole new slant and often makes him funnier than Costello – in fact, much funnier. For the first time, Abbott's comedy chops are on full display; it's Bud who makes each of these episodes more enjoyable than the team's feature films. Without losing their basic characterizations, Abbott & Costello behave as a team more closely patterned after what Laurel & Hardy created in their own films: pals through thick and thin. In a couple of episodes, Bud and Lou even share the same bed just like Stan and Ollie. The revamp works because Bud and Lou are now required to carry each episode in a united effort.

There's a widely circulated quote where Groucho Marx famously declared that Bud Abbott was "the greatest straightman ever." If that's the case (and I have no reason to dispute it), then Sidney Fields, portraying the team's hotheaded landlord Mr. Fields, is certainly the second-greatest straightman ever. Fields' timing, delivery, and brilliance at uttering the most-inane dialogue that somehow sounds logical is a highlight of every scene he appears in. If you doubt Sid Fields' abilities as an outstanding comedian, just watch his performance as the jailed derelict doing "Slowly I Turn" ("Niagara Falls") opposite Costello in Season One. Both Fields and Gordon Jones (as the dumb-as-nails, eternally grouchy Mike The Cop) are carryovers from the previous season and add considerably to each episode's hilarity.

Without the bizarre and often surreal burlesque routines this time around, Lou Costello tones down his squealing, bombastic reactions and shows a different side as a more versatile, subtle and effective comic. For comparison, the team's rendition of their classic "Who's On First" in the Season One episode "The Actor's Home" is their weakest filmed version of the routine, due to Lou's sloppy, ill-timed, and frantic delivery. Even Bud can't pull him back into the bit

In "Private Eye," Bud finds a spooky-looking portrait of Bobby Barber in the attic.

Bud: "What're you lookin' at me like that for? Oh no, you gotta go!"

In "The Tax Return," Bud attempts to kick a trapped crook in the behind but repeatedly can't lift his leg high enough to make contact.

Bud (wearily): "I need more exercise!"

Bud helps Lou practice to propose by pretending to be Lou's girlfriend in "Honeymoon House." Lou bashfully leans on Abbott's arm.

Bud: "No, no! Don't creep in! Be romantic but don't 'nwaaaah'!"

on the A&C Show, Season Two

when Lou goes wildly off the rails. Season One's "The Birthday Party," with Lou portraying a despondent outcast on his birthday, is an attempt to evoke pity a la Charlie Chaplin's pathos. It's about the most depressing self-indulgent scene Costello ever attempted (not forgetting his off-beat performances in vanity failures like the cheerless *Little Giant* and the even worse *Dance With Me, Henry*). Whereas in Season Two it's always easier to feel sympathy for Costello's "little guy" character because he manages to be both human and funny at the same time.

The second season debuted during the Fall of 1953. In these episodes, Lou Costello looks nearly the same as in earlier years, just a tad bit older. On the other hand, Bud Abbott has gone through a transformation, and it's all for the better. The added years (Bud's now in his mid-fifties) is not a detriment, in fact it works to his character's advantage. Bud now looks like a slightly exaggerated and comical con man. Abbott is no longer lean and mean; Bud's acquired a noticeable paunch to his waistline, and since he's no longer wearing a hi-top toupee, his receding hairline is on display in all its glory. A welcome touch — actually a deft finishing touch — is the addition of a dapper pencil-thin mustache. This upper-lip adornment accentuates Bud's image as the confidence man of all time. Abbott's voice, always gravelly, has acquired extra grit through the years, and without the presence of a major studio dialogue coach on the set, we get to hear Bud's unfiltered New York accent. Phrases like "a joint account" becomes "a jernt account;" "oil" becomes "erl;" a coward is "yeller;" his partner's last name "Costello" is pronounced "kah-stellah."

As a result of a crazy doctor's experiment, Lou believes he has the power of invincibility in "The Fencing Master." When a tough guy tries to punch Lou in the face, he finds his arm is suddenly paralyzed.

Bud: "Whatsa matter? You yeller?"

Tough guy: "Who's yeller?"

Tough guy (happily): "My arm! I can move it again!"

An amusing quirk of Bud's is to facially mimic the words of the other actors from time to time. One of the funniest examples is in the episode "The Fencing Master" when Mr. Fields acts as the second in a duel challenge with Costello. As Fields explains the formalities between duelling combatants, Bud doesn't appear to be taking any of it too seriously, his head slightly bobbing in carefree rhythm with the instructions.

Unlike his dim-witted friend, Bud always looks debonair even when he's flat broke. His stylish fedora is ever-present; in his suit jacket breast pocket he sports a monogrammed "Bud" handkerchief. With an ebony cigarette holder clenched between his teeth, and a pinky ring on his left hand, Abbott cuts the perfect image of the shifty, sly scammer. Through it all, street smart Abbott looks after the safety of his childlike pal Lou, which automatically makes Bud both likable and human.

Through various Season Two episodes we learn a good deal about what "Bud Abbott" does. He doesn't hold a steady job, and instead spends his time in pool halls where he comes up with hairbrained schemes to generate cash. Bud enjoys going to the racetrack; he deals with shady characters who sell counterfeit tickets to sporting events; and his show biz friends could easily pass for gangsters. Bud's behind on his car payments, and along with partner Lou, he owes about two years' worth of back rent to Mr. Fields. Yet Bud is also street smart; he understands the finer points about taking graft, and on one occasion explains to innocent Costello that "the badger game" is a blackmail scheme.

Here's a classic example of the artful Abbott in action: in the terrific episode "Uncle From New Jersey," the boys are in trouble once again with Mr. Fields when they're even further behind in rent payments. Bud tells Lou he's going out for a cup of coffee, adding that he'll try to raise some money. "Don't leave the apartment!" he warns Lou. "As long as one of us is here, Fields can't lock us out!"

Mr. Fields tricks Lou by telling him he's wanted on the hall telephone, then padlocks the door to their apartment. Lou, wearing only his nightgown, is left shivering in the drafty hallway. Meanwhile down at the corner cigar store, Bud convinces his friend Joe to prank Mr. Fields on the telephone, assuring Joe casually that "it's only a gag." As Bud stifles a laugh, Joe goes into his spiel: "Mr. Fields? This is Mr. Parker of the law firm of Pintok, Perrin and Parker. I'm trying to locate a Mr. Lou Costello…we've been commissioned by Mr. Costello's Uncle Rupert in Paterson, New Jersey to find his nephew. It seems the old gentleman is very wealthy and as Mr. Costello is his only heir…"

Fields' delight at hearing this news turns to horror when he remembers that he's thrown Costello out of the apartment. Rushing out to Lou, Fields tells him the eviction "was only a joke, you're my pal! Everything I have is yours!" As Mr. Fields fixes Costello a cup of coffee in the kitchen, Bud returns to the apartment. "Well," he asks Lou, "have you seen that bald-headed moron lately?" Mr. Fields practically leaps into the frame and cheerfully proclaims, "Here I am!" An embarrassed Abbott responds, "I knew you were there all the time, I was only fooling!" Fields, radiating the spirit of bonhomie, implores the boys to take a few hundred dollars from him. "How we gonna pay the guy back?" asks Lou. Bud replies, "You don't want to hurt Mr. Fields' feelings, do you? You don't want to insult him? I don't want to hurt his feelings so I took his money!" "Mr. Fields," Lou asks "I don't want to hurt your feelings, can I have a hundred, too?"

In "Uncle From New Jersey," Bud gets a pal to prank Mr. Fields and claim that Lou's rich uncle is looking for him.

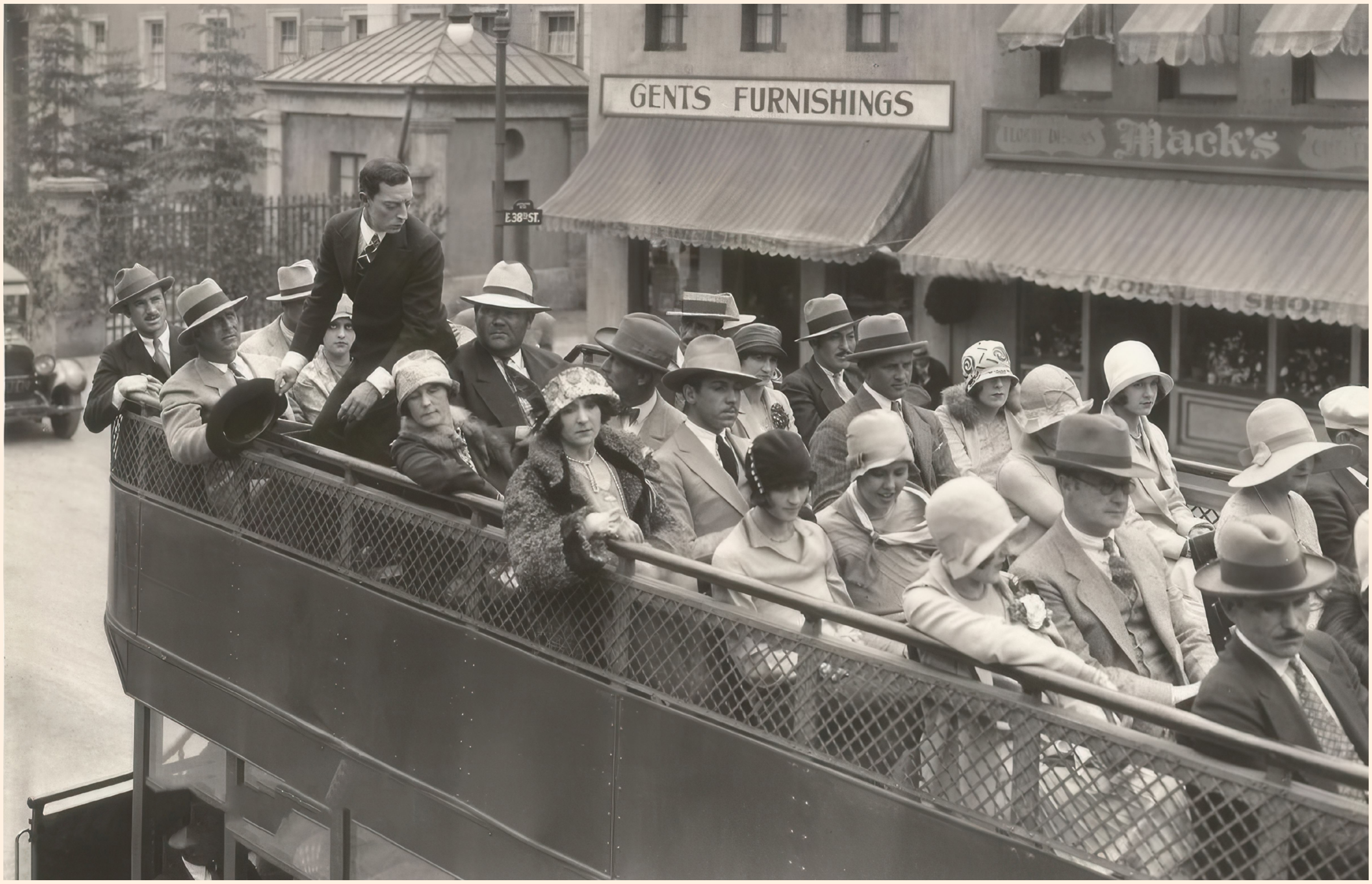
Mr. Fields suddenly becomes chummy with Bud and Lou, offering them free money…

A finance company calls Abbott to ask when he'll pay his overdue car loan. Bud drives the agent crazy by pretending it's a message that Lou's uncle is coming to visit the boys.

Lou: "If my Uncle Rupert walks through that front door, I'm diving out that window."
Bud: "Why?"
Lou: "He's been dead for 15 years!"

Fields leaves the boys' apartment happily strutting down the hall when he meets Mike The Cop and tells him the news about Lou's rich uncle. For once Mike is thinking…and he asks Mr. Fields, "By any chance, did the boys put the bite on you?" Reality dawns on Fields, who suddenly becomes furious at Bud and Lou, calling them crooks, promising to have them "thrown in jail!" At that fateful moment the telephone rings. Fields makes a mad dash for the receiver but Abbott gets there first. It's a repo man from the Acme Finance Company, demanding to know when Bud is going to make a payment on his car. Bud, thinking fast, tells Costello and Fields, "Ah, yeah. It's Western Union. Go ahead with the message – 'dear nephew Louis, just learned where you were. Will be there tonight. Uncle Rupert.'" All the while the man from Acme is shouting on the other end of the line, "What's the matter with you, Abbott? This is the Acme Finance Company!" Fields however believes Bud's performance and is now convinced that the rich uncle is real. He gives Bud another three hundred dollars to entertain "Uncle Rupert." "See?" Bud says triumphantly to Lou, "always use your head!"

Later in the episode Mike suspects that the boys have "murdered" Uncle Rupert, who in actuality is Lou in costume wearing a fake beard and whiskers. Mike is about to open a steamer trunk with an axe, believing Uncle Rupert's body is inside. "Now wait a minute Mike!" Bud shouts with authority, "you know the law better than that! You're a policeman! You know Section 14, paragraph 9 of the Penal Code says you've got to have a search warrant!" Mike backs down, almost humiliated. Later when his police lieutenant arrives and



Buster Keaton liked putting his crew members in his films. In *The Cameraman* (1928) Buster prepares to climb down the side of a double-decker bus while Clyde Bruckman obliges his boss by portraying a passenger (bottom right). In a 35 year screenwriting career Bruckman's final credits were for *The Abbott and Costello Show*.

insists that Mike breaks down the door to the boys' apartment, Mike starts reciting what Bud told him about the penal code. "Are you nuts?" asks the lieutenant, "break it in!"

Fortunately Lou is inside the room wearing his Uncle Rupert disguise. The phone rings again and Bud pretends it's Costello on the line. Once again, it's the man from the finance company, going out of his mind ("I'm not Costello! This is the Acme Finance Company!"). "Uncle From New Jersey" is a perfectly polished little story, wonderfully developed, allowing all four main players to share the laughs between them. It was written by Jack Townley, a veteran scriptwriter of numerous two-reelers and B features since the late 1920s. Coincidentally, Townley worked on a Wheeler & Woolsey feature in the 1930s where Jean Yarborough was the assistant director. Yarborough was the director of all the Season Two episodes. In total Townley wrote ten scripts for the second season, and each of them is exceptionally good, with "Cheapskates," "$1,000 TV Prize," "The Tax Return," and "The Fencing Master" in particular standing out.

The other main writer working this season was the legendary Clyde Bruckman, with 15 entries (two co-written with Sid Fields). It's been well documented how Bruckman, with over 30 years in the film business, had lost his way due to chronic alcoholism. He had been part of Buster Keaton's team of gag men beginning in 1921 and later collaborated with Harold Lloyd, W.C. Fields, Laurel & Hardy, and Harry Langdon among others. With a penchant for recycling gags and business from earlier films Clyde was able to get by for years, handing in scripts cobbled together from comedies he either worked on or had the opportunity to view while working for Keaton. What got him in trouble was lifting whole script pages (and in the case of talkies, retaining the original dialogue intact) from films he had worked on for Harold Lloyd. Over a period from 1945-47 Lloyd sued both Universal and Columbia Pictures over material that Bruckman lifted verbatim from *The Freshman*, *Welcome Danger* and *Movie Crazy*. Had Lloyd and his lawyers been more eagle-eyed they might've also discovered additional films made that recycled scenes from his *The Kid Brother*, *Feet First*, and *Professor Beware*. Veteran comedy writer Felix Adler and writer-director Jules White were also guilty of plagiarizing Lloyd's material, yet it was poor Clyde Bruckman who bore the brunt of Lloyd's legal team's accusations.

After Harold Lloyd won his case, Bruckman eventually became persona non grata in the movie industry. Fortunately for Clyde, the early years of television proved to be his salvation. He worked on Buster Keaton's first two television series (1949-51) and then became a writer for Bud and Lou's second sea-

Clyde Bruckman (seen here arm in arm with Barbara Kent and his next boss, Harold Lloyd) on location for *Welcome Danger* (1929). For this film Bruckman suggested Lloyd borrow material from Monty Banks' *Horse Shoes* and Lloyd agreed. Possibly Harold's decision encouraged Clyde to continue recycling routines in the future until his scripts became outright plagiarism. Holding a microphone to the left is Lodge Cunningham. Cunningham was chief sound engineer at Metropolitan Studios, working there on films produced by Educational (including Lloyd Hamilton's earliest talkies), Howard Hughes (*Hell's Angels*) and Lloyd's next talkie *Feet First* before becoming Edward Bernds' coworker in Columbia's Sound Department. (Image from Exhibitors Herald-World.)

son. Several of the stories he submitted for *The Abbott and Costello Show* were based on bits and pieces he had previously done for Keaton. Bruckman finally knew to steer clear of Harold Lloyd's material, but Clyde's friend Buster didn't mind if he liberated some classic Keaton gags. Eleanor Keaton told me that Buster helped Clyde write scripts during the time Keaton had his own two-reel series at Columbia (1939-41). Buster would not take screen credit for his own contributions to these latter-day Bruckman screenplays, preferring to cede ownership (as well as the financial compensation) to his old friend.

The biggest surprise found in Bruckman's scripts for *The Abbott and Costello Show* is his considerable reliance on material borrowed from his brief stint at the Hal Roach Studios in 1927. Bruckman barely spent six months at Roach's as a writer and director, yet he made extensive use of situations from at least four of the films that were in production when he worked at the studio (*The Second 100 Years*, *Love 'Em And Feed 'Em*, *Call of The Cuckoo* and *Pass The Gravy*). For all this rehashing of old material, a number of Bruckman's episodes are quite good. To a comedy buff, all of Clyde's A&C scripts are fascinating; they're like artifacts from an archaeological dig —with the viewer sifting through classic routines taken from different eras within the comedy film world.

Let's digress briefly and talk about an incident early on in Clyde's career that may have influenced his reliance on reusing earlier material. Years before Bruckman's troubles began, Harold Lloyd was certainly aware that Clyde would suggest comic business from other comedians' films — and Lloyd, for all his later protestations, even welcomed the idea. In Lloyd's legal case against Universal, Bruckman presented testimony in 1945 that during the production of Harold's 1929 feature

Welcome Danger (co-written and directed by Bruckman), he (Clyde) suggested using some business that originally appeared in Monty Banks' *Horse Shoes* (1927, also directed by Bruckman). The "business" involves the lead villain, who has one arm in his jacket while the hero-comedian has his arm in the other side. As a second heavy tries to punch the comic, the comic punches the second heavy first, then spins around as the same heavy attempts to hit him. This causes the heavy to accidentally punch the lead villain whose arm is still stuck in the jacket. Spinning like a merry-go-round out of control, the punching continues until eventually both bad guys are knocked out. Monty Banks, a thoroughly likable and unjustly long-neglected comedian, performed the comedy business beautifully in a climactic scene of *Horse Shoes* (ironically set in a courtroom), with Bob Kortman as his chief nemesis. Fans of The Three Stooges will recall this gag as it appears in at least four of their own short comedies, with the first occasion being *Horses Collars* (1935), which happened to be directed by Bruckman.

Harold Lloyd like the idea as Clyde described it, but wanted to see how the gag was executed on film. According to Bruckman, Lloyd even borrowed a print of *Horse Shoes* from the film's distributor Pathé through their Los Angeles exchange. In Lloyd's *Welcome Danger* the gag is performed smoothly but it just isn't as effective here, mainly because Harold is battling scrawny fifty-year-old Charles Middleton (with his arm in the jacket), while the other bad guy happens to be Blue Washington, a 6-foot 2-inch athletic bruiser who towers over Harold. The severely mismatched combatants don't lend the necessary credibility to the gag, while the uninspired use of sound — realistic moans and groans — minimizes the laughs. Nevertheless, Lloyd and his two heavies execute the precision timing as seamlessly as Monty Banks did in *Horse Shoes*. Who knows — it's possible that Lloyd's willingness to borrow the gag would later encourage Clyde to continue purloining material whenever fresh inspiration failed him.

Tarring the roof, Charlie Hall makes a welcome appearance with Bud and Lou in "The Fall Guys," written by Clyde Bruckman.

Bud doesn't ingratiate himself when he falls on top of Mr. Hall.

Charlie hasn't been this annoyed at a comedy team since you-know-who. One wonders if Bruckman remembered Charlie from *The Battle of The Century* and *Leave 'Em Laughing* and wrote this part with him in mind. For that matter, I wonder if Clyde and Lou remembered each other from *The Battle of The Century*?

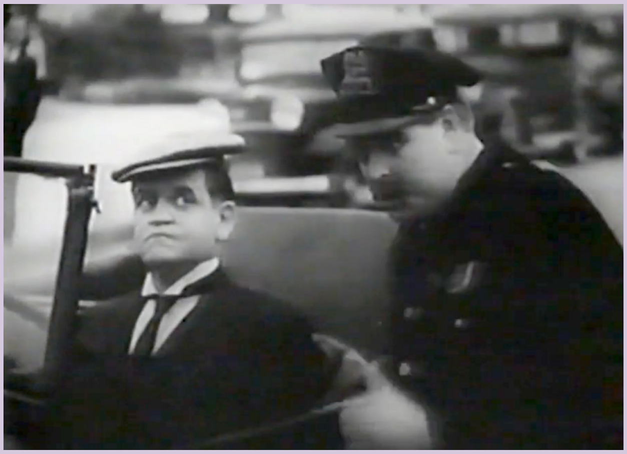
When the *Horse Shoes*/ *Welcome Danger* gag business was discussed during the trial, Harold claimed to have no recollection of this event ever occurring. Whether Bruckman's testimony would've assisted Universal's defense is doubtful. Ultimately, it was only Bruckman's word against Lloyd's.

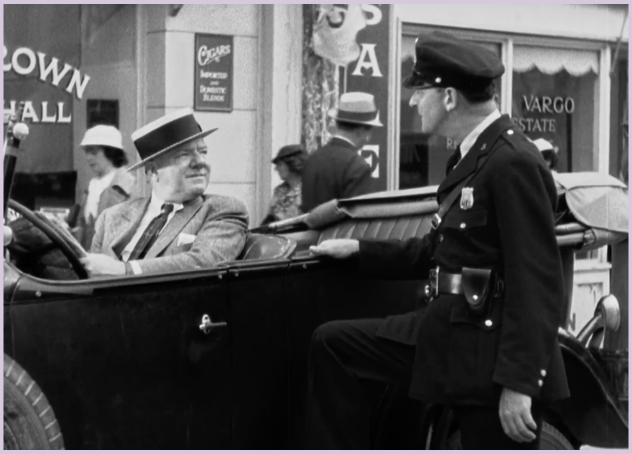
Back to *The Abbott and Costello Show*.

Unlike Jack Townley's taut sitcom formula, Clyde's scripts for the boys have a free and easy approach, containing a greater number of sight gags and occasionally some knockabout slapstick. One wouldn't imagine that this is the best type of humor for the team, yet both comedians work extremely well in this format, affirming their own versatility. As noted film historian Scott McGillivray points out, "For an act that was strongly dependent on verbal humor, Abbott and Costello did a surprising amount of visual comedy." Overall, Bruckman contributed nearly as many quality scripts to the series as Townley did. "In Society," "Efficiency Experts," Car Trouble," and "Honeymoon House" to name a few, are all first-rate. Even the lesser episodes like "South of Dixie" are fun because of the improbable situations. Bud, Lou, Mr. Fields, and Mike The Cop are playing roles in an amateur theater production set during the Civil War. Bruckman borrows gags and whole scenes from his Columbia two-reelers for Keaton and The Stooges that utilized fairly elaborate sets and actual exterior se-

When Bud Was Funnier Than Lou

A tight spot: the routine Clyde Bruckman recycled most often featured a comedian whose parked car is boxed in between two other vehicles. Originally co-written by Bruckman and W.C. Fields in 1932 for a Mack Sennett comedy, Fields was replaced in the film by Lloyd Hamilton due to a script disagreement between W.C. and Sennett.


Lloyd Hamilton and Bud Jamison in *Too Many Highballs* (1933)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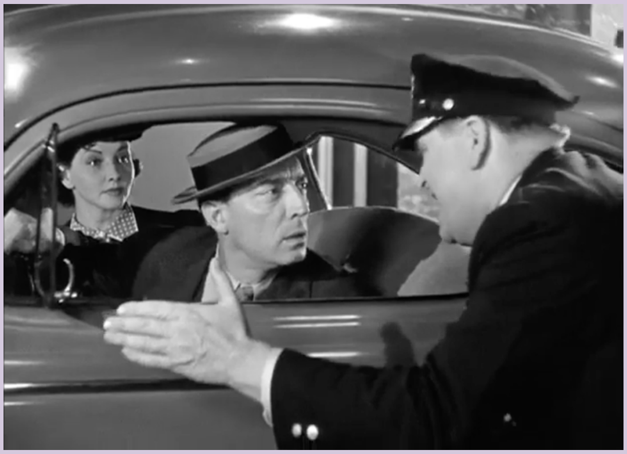
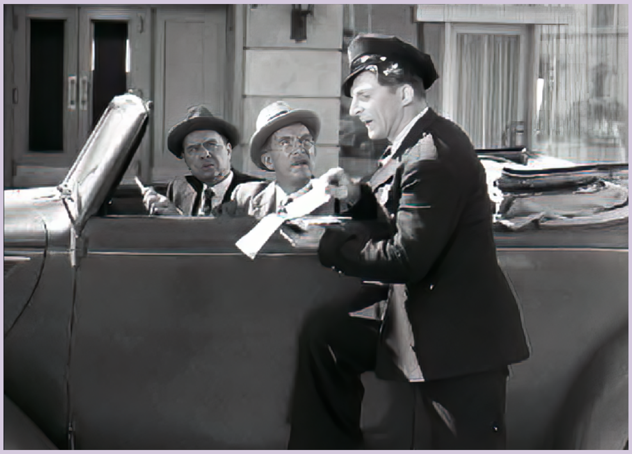
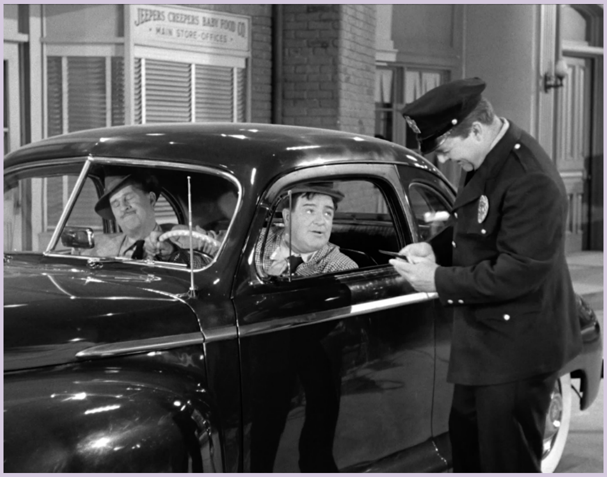
W.C. Fields and James Burke in *Man On The Flying Trapeze* (1935)


Dorothy Appleby, Buster Keaton and Bud Jamison in *Nothing But Pleasure* (1940)


Lorin Raker, Andy Clyde and Emil Sitka in *Andy Plays Hooky* (1946)


JEEPERS CREEPERS BABY FOOD CO
MAIN STORE-OFFICES
Bud, Lou and Gordon Jones in *The A&C Show* episode "Car Trouble" (1953)

on the A&C Show, Season Two

In "Uncle Bozzo's Visit," Lou's uncle terrorizes the boys while proving he's the world's greatest opera singer...

Uncle Bozzo even sings in a jail cell...

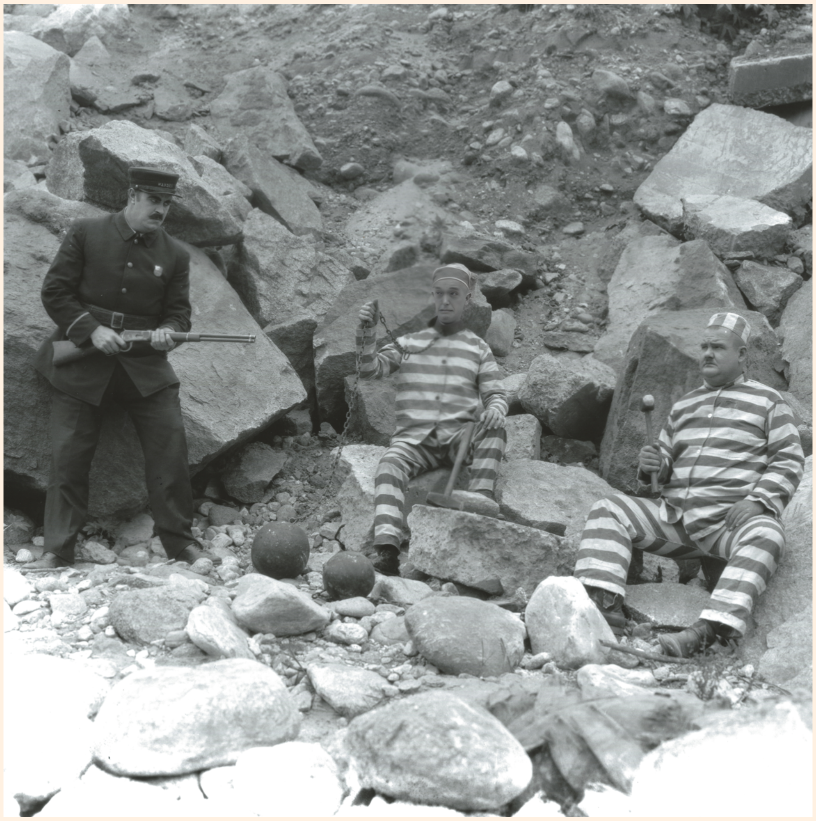
...until Bud has had enough.

quences. Denied that kind of budget, "South of Dixie" recreates chases and routines outrageously improbable to stage in a cheesy amateur production, culminating with Costello being dragged across stage by a galloping horse! When it's all over the viewer might be disappointed that Bud, Lou, Fields and Mike didn't eat a potholder and cough up feathers.

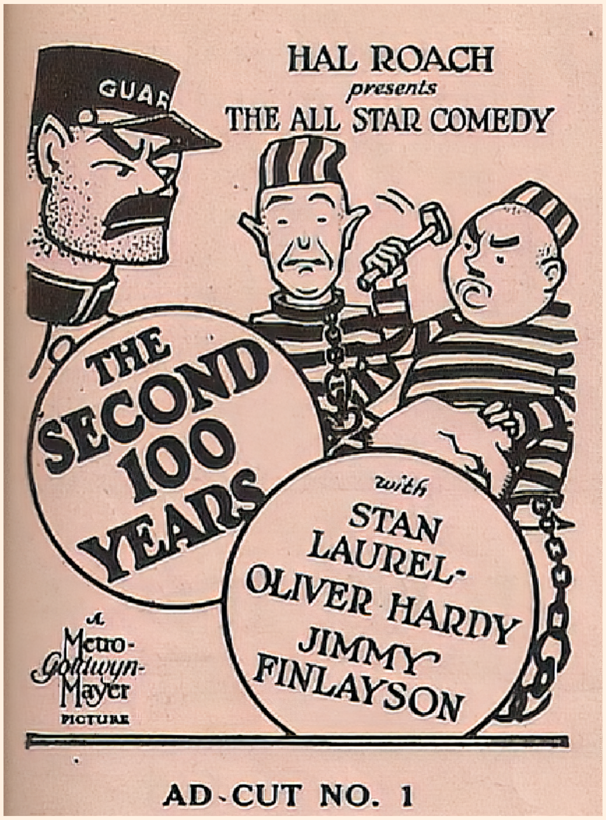
One of my favorite Bruckman episodes is "Uncle Bozzo's Visit," where Lou's Uncle (played by the loud, flamboyant and very funny former opera star Fortunio Bonanova) comes over from Italy to "visit my favorite little-a nephew Luigi." First he mistakes Bud for Lou and kisses Abbott before Bud can direct him to Costello. Looking at Abbott, Uncle Bozzo exclaims, "Then you must-a be his good friend, Bad Abbott!" "Not Bad Abbott!" grumbles Bud, before asking Costello, "Who is this fugitive from a rummage sale?" Costello explains that he wrote his uncle a letter ten years before but Bozzo interjects that "I just-a learned how to read!" Bozzo promises that after a few months' rest, he'll make them plenty of money because he's a great opera singer.

Unfortunately his powerful voice only manages to knock paintings off the wall and infuriate Mr. Fields. When some manual labor is required of him, Bozzo pleads, "I got a weak back." "You've got a weak mind, too!" Bud responds. Later in the episode Bud, Lou and Bozzo end up in the local jail, with Abbott and Bozzo in one cell while Costello is paired with a roughneck named Slug (G. Pat Collins) in the other. Slug is in jail for the attempted murder of his wife, whom he claims has a horrible singing voice, "singin' opera, no less." Slug continues: "She don't do nothin' except practice this lousy song, this 'O Sole Mia' thing. Finally this crummy ditty is gettin' me bats…before I knew it I had my hands right around her throat…" At which point Bozzo, in the next cell, just happens to start singing 'O Sole Mia'! Before Slug gets his mitts around Costello's neck, Bud comes to his partner's rescue. Offscreen Bozzo's singing is suddenly interrupted by a loud crash. When we cut to their cell, we see Bozzo lying on the ground unconscious while Abbott

When Bud Was Funnier Than Lou

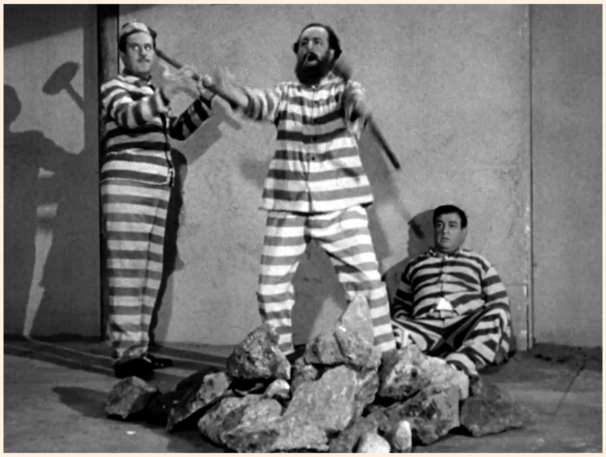


Tiny Sandford, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in the original fadeout scene deleted from *The Second 100 Years* (1927). Clyde Bruckman was hired by Hal Roach as a writer/director just weeks before this film went into production.



This adslick suggests that the action in the final sequence might have brought the film full circle: a disgusted Ollie hits crying Stan with his mallet. (The film begins in the boys; cell, with Hardy scolding Laurel to stop crying.) *Courtesy of Randy Skretvedt*

Moe uses a mallet to break rocks on Curly's head in the Bruckman-scripted *So Long, Mr. Chumps* (filmed 1940).

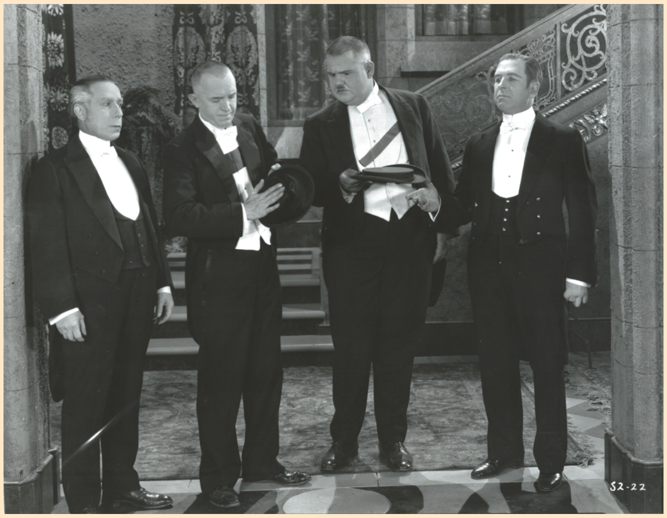


Abbott attempts to knock out opera-singing Uncle Bozzo (Fortunio Bonanova) but it's Lou who accidentally gets conked on the head ("Uncle Bozzo's Visit"). Script again by Bruckman.

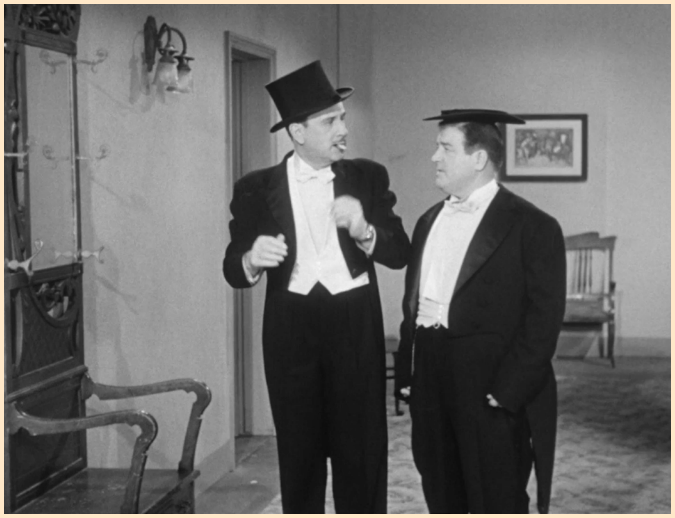
is holding the shattered remains of a chair he's broken over Bozzo's head!

At the final wrap-up we see Bud, Lou and Uncle Bozzo in striped convict uniforms swinging mallets on a rockpile. Bozzo resumes singing 'O Sole Mia," which compels Lou to toss a huge rock into the air, hoping to conk his uncle on the head. Instead the rock lands on Lou's head, leaving him unconscious. The scene fades out with Bud swinging a sledgehammer on Bozzo's head, where it has no effect whatsoever as the happy singer continues his aria.

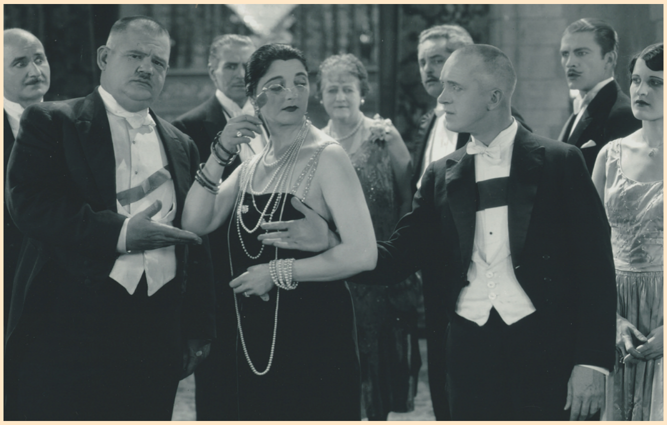
What is especially interesting about this fadeout gag is that it's very similar to the original ending of Laurel & Hardy's *The Second 100 Years* (1927). This two-reeler was one of the earliest of that beloved team's comedies, with the memorable scene of Stan and Ollie disguising their striped convict



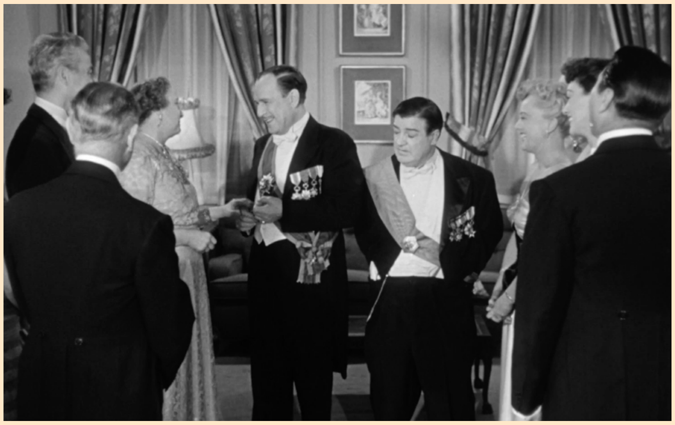
Laurel & Hardy are mistaken for French prison officials at an elegant reception in their honor in their early comedy *The Second 100 Years*. Stan has difficulties dealing with his collapsible top hat. Clyde Bruckman likely worked on the story and contributed gags, or at least was present when this film was shot on the Roach lot in June 1927.



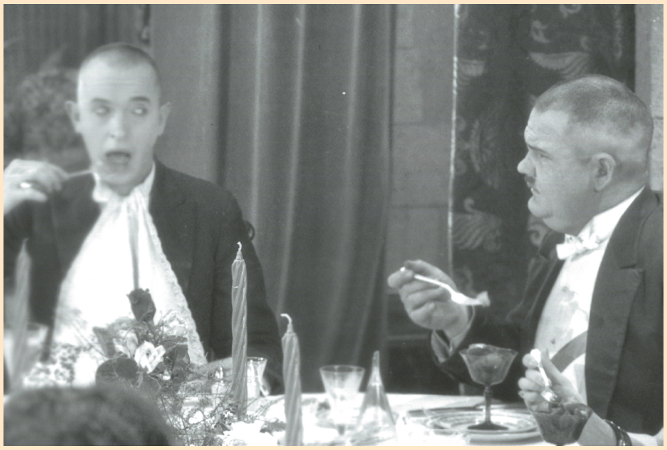
Bud and Lou are hired to impersonate British noblemen at a posh dinner party in the Bruckman-scripted episode "In Society." Lou also has difficulties with his collapsible top hat.



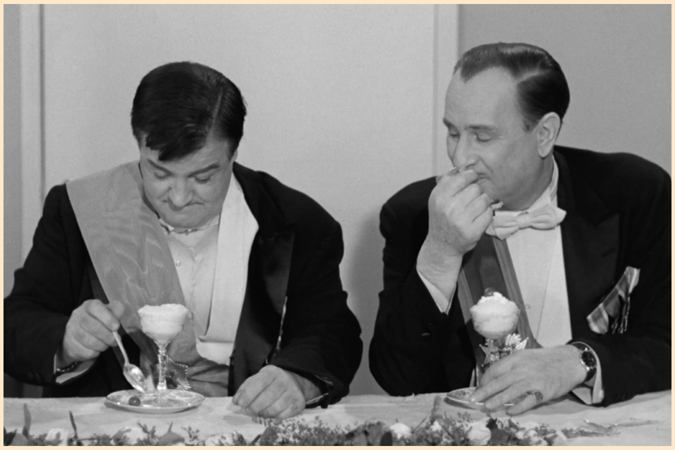
Stan and Ollie mix with the other guests at the soiree held in their honor.



Bud and Lou attempt to display their best social graces at the reception.



During dinner, Stan has difficulty chasing an elusive cherry around the table.



Twenty-six years later and Lou is chasing that cherry once again.

outfits and painting their way out of prison. Jam-packed with action, the short runs a very full two-reels. The film fades out with Laurel & Hardy captured again by the prison guard. But the film's synopsis in the original press sheet describes what was most likely the original coda: "Stan and Oliver are given an additional sentence and told to start making sand out of boulders." A single posed publicity still was issued showing Laurel & Hardy on the rockpile with Ollie holding a mallet. One of the newspaper ad mats issued for the film features a cartoon image of Ollie striking Stan on the head with a mallet. There is no writer's credit on the short but Clyde Bruckman possibly worked on it, and if he didn't, he was certainly aware of its filming. Roach hired Clyde in May 1927 and by the 25th of that month, Bruckman was actively working on the lot. *The Second 100 Years* was in production two weeks later.

One can presume that the rockpile sequence was deleted from Laurel & Hardy's *The Second 100 Years* either because the film was already a full two-reels, or perhaps the preview audience didn't care for the bit, and felt that Stan and Ollie had already suffered through enough!

Fast-forward thirteen years to 1940, and Clyde Bruckman is a screenwriter on The Three Stooges short, *So Long Mr. Chumps*. The short features the Stooges also painting their way out of prison and ends with them on the rockpile, with Moe breaking rocks on Curly's head using a sledgehammer.

Fast-forward another thirteen years to 1953, and Clyde Bruckman has written "Uncle Bozzo's Visit," and — well, you already know the rest of this story!

If you've ever wondered why the statue of Lou Costello in his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey is dressed in the costume he wore in *The Abbott and Costello Show*, or why the Esco "Greatest Entertainers" figure of Bud Abbott is modeled after his appearance on their TV series, down to the pencil-thin mustache, it's obvious that the team's fans know and love them for this show. It's our loss that Bud and Lou didn't continue their television series for at least one more season. Perhaps Lou's health became the overriding factor, as he had another bout with rheumatic fever and after all, he was approaching fifty. The strain of a third season might've taken a greater toll on his stamina than he could handle.

Bud and Lou's final-ever appearance together on television came January 5, 1957, as they were the stars of *Fabulous Las Vegas,* a live variety show broadcast by local station KNXT, featuring acts currently performing in the gambling capital. When their Vegas gig ended the following week, Bud later claimed he had no idea at the time that Lou was breaking up the act. He remarked that Lou apparently longed to try his skills as a dramatic actor: "I figured I'd wait until Lou wanted to return." In the meantime Lou predicted to the press that "slapstick comedy is on the way out," and declared that "I will never have another partner." Despite Costello's prediction about the demise of slapstick, he lived long enough to witness the triumphant return of The Three Stooges (Moe, Larry and Curly-Joe) as bigger stars than ever before, when they appeared on *The Steve Allen Show* (January 11, 1959), as well as the smashing success of Robert Youngson's silent comedy compilation, *The Golden Age of Comedy* (1958). Ironically, at the same time when Costello was complaining to the press about how difficult it was for him to find solo work in drama ("I want to be a pathetic

The A&C episode "Honeymoon House" has been called a remake of Keaton's *One Week*. It isn't. The only idea borrowed from Buster's film has Lou's rival mischievously painting different numbers on crates for a prefabricated house. All of the gag sequences at the house are lifted verbatim from the Hal Roach two-reeler *Call Of The Cuckoo* (1927) starring Max Davidson. Bud and Lou's version even copies identical camera setups from the Davidson short. In this posed still Max and family try to stop a rolling piano from sliding across the unlevelled floor.

In the A&C remake Costello bears the brunt of the cruising piano.

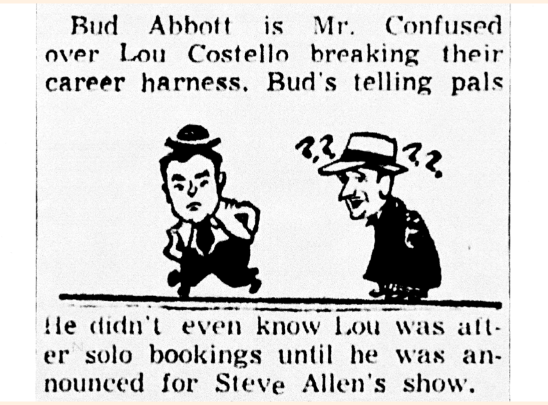
Max's wife (Lillion Elliot) discovers that half of the sliding doors are missing.

The boys reuse the same gag and top it, with assistance from Sidney Fields.

on the A&C Show, Season Two

little guy…What I'm looking for is something with pathos"), a contemporary review for *The Golden Age of Comedy* noted that "one of the cleverest of all Mack Sennett comedians, Billy Bevan … created the original of the famous 'battle with the oyster' gag," and concluded that "Costello has used it since — but Billy's conception is still the best — and the freshest."

Although Lou told reporters that "when I'm in California, I'm at [Abbott's] home every other day," Bud told the press in 1958 that he didn't even know Lou was after solo bookings until Costello was announced for Steve Allen's show the previous year. "I haven't seen or talked to Lou since we broke up a year ago," Abbott added. "But you can tell him I wish him all the best." Bud also wanted reporters to let Lou know that "the door's always open" to revive the Abbott and Costello partnership, "and the light's always in the window." Costello subsequently admitted publicly that he hadn't seen Abbott "in over a year."



Bud Abbott is Mr. Confused over Lou Costello breaking their career harness. Bud's telling pals

He didn't even know Lou was after solo bookings until he was announced for Steve Allen's show.

A sad finale for the team in this 1958 editorial cartoon.

When my old pal and former writing partner Ted Okuda spoke to A & C's frequent director Charles Lamont in 1980, Lamont told him, "After they (Bud and Lou) split up, Lou tried to make it as a single, but it didn't work. Lou needed Bud. After all those years together, you couldn't imagine one without the other."

When I first met Charles Lamont at the Motion Picture Country Home, he recalled for me Costello's solo Las Vegas act from August 1958: "I opened the newspaper and there it was: 'Lou Costello at the Dunes Hotel. Free round-trip flight from Los Angeles to Vegas. Buffet dinner, cocktails, free limousine service, plus the whole floor show.' The works! [My wife] Estelle and I could go to Las Vegas and be back home a little after midnight. I think the cost for everything was twenty dollars! This was practically an unheard-of bargain at the time. And I was naturally curious about how Lou was getting along without Bud. So I said to my wife, "We're goin'!'"

Costello was appearing in "The Minsky's Follies of 1959," reprising many of the routines he made famous with Abbott. For a man who wanted to explore new horizons, who swore off performing any more rowdy comedy, and who stated he would never have another partner, Lou instead teamed up with Sidney Fields to perform many of the same old routines from Abbott & Costello's considerable stockpile. But if Costello simply didn't want to work with Abbott, he at least picked the second-best straightman in the business.

Lamont continued: "When Costello stepped out on the stage, I realized pretty soon why The Dunes was promoting a bargain-priced show. Something was off about Lou. His timing was gone, he always seemed to be a beat behind in his responses. Sid Fields was doing Abbott's part. And Sid was great, but unlike Bud, he came across as a little too angry —too aggressive. I think Sid understood that Lou was off and tried to adjust his delivery, but then Lou tried to cover for himself by making silly faces at the audience. You can do that so many times before the audience stops laughing. I'm no prude but the show had a line of naked [actually topless] showgirls and then Estelle wanted to leave early. We ended up going to the lounge where we caught The Ink Spots and they didn't disappoint us. But that was the last time we saw Lou. The show was packed because the audience got a bargain package, but the actual performance had to be a big disappointment for Abbott and Costello fans."

Finally getting his chance to eschew roughhouse comedy, Costello did a serious guest role on *Wagon Train*, as well as a one-shot semi-comic episode of *The G.E. Theater*. He was fine (almost subdued) in both roles but when he appeared on *The Steve Allen Show* doing an Abbott & Costello routine with Gabe Dell, it gives me no pleasure to note that the segment was a sad thing to watch. Encores on Steve Allen with able comics like Louis Nye and Tom Poston enacting Abbott's part were no better. Both Nye and Poston tried hard to emulate Bud Abbott (Louis Nye even wore a mustache similar to Bud's) but they snarl their lines like a couple of lowlife thugs; their hammy imitations make them come across as bigger bullies than Bud Abbott ever portrayed in the team's 1940s movies. While Nye and Poston are both menacing, they're not in the least bit funny. And Costello's performance sadly is just a shadow of what he had achieved when he worked with Abbott.

There was only one Bud Abbott; and together with Lou they were unbeatable in the laughter they created on *The Abbott & Costello Show*, which we still enjoy some 70 years later.

We've taken a closer look a few of the best episodes of *The Abbott & Costello Show*'s season two but as the accompanying images demonstrate, the boys made many more classic entries to delight both old fans and new admirers. I highly recommend this latest Blu-Ray release from The 3-D Film Archive for all the team's fans. You can almost hear Sid Fields emphatically reciting the last line from the press release: "Frankly, if you don't have these stunning Blu-ray releases of the boys' classic TV series, you cannot call yourself an Abbott and Costello fan." Amen to that, neighbor!

* * *

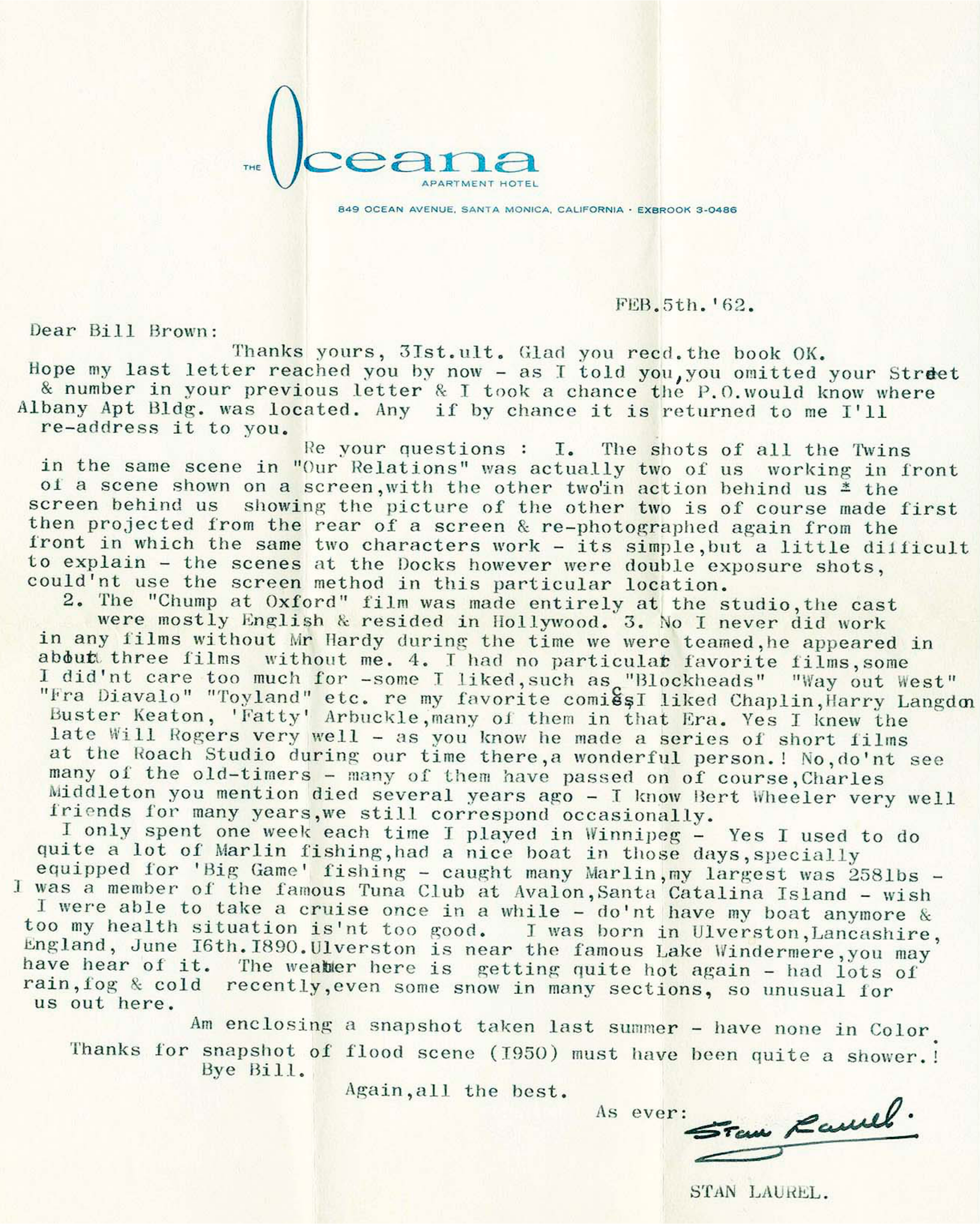
Ed Watz's latest book The Right To Remain Silent: Buster Keaton in The Talkies *is due to be released by Bear Manor Media in the near future.*

The Abbott & Costello Show © 2025 TCA Television Corp.

In Their Own Write

Letters from Hollywood — Stan Laurel

Comedian Stan Laurel was a prolific letter writer in his later years, corresponding with fans, friends, and colleagues all around the world. This missive from 1962, which includes a fascinating list of Stan's favorite comics, was a response to friend William V. "Bill" Brown in Winnipeg, Canada. – PG



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FEB.5th.'62.

Dear Bill Brown:

Thanks yours, 3Ist.ult. Glad you recd.the book OK. Hope my last letter reached you by now - as I told you,you omitted your Street & number in your previous letter & I took a chance the P.O.would know where Albany Apt Bldg. was located. Any if by chance it is returned to me I'll re-address it to you.

Re your questions : I. The shots of all the Twins in the same scene in "Our Relations" was actually two of us working in front of a scene shown on a screen,with the other two in action behind us - the screen behind us showing the picture of the other two is of course made first then projected from the rear of a screen & re-photographed again from the front in which the same two characters work - its simple,but a little difficult to explain - the scenes at the Docks however were double exposure shots, could'nt use the screen method in this particular location.

2. The "Chump at Oxford" film was made entirely at the studio,the cast were mostly English & resided in Hollywood. 3. No I never did work in any films without Mr Hardy during the time we were teamed,he appeared in about three films without me. 4. I had no particular favorite films,some I did'nt care too much for -some I liked,such as "Blockheads" "Way out West" "Fra Diavalo" "Toyland" etc. re my favorite comics,I liked Chaplin,Harry Langdon Buster Keaton, 'Fatty' Arbuckle,many of them in that Era. Yes I knew the late Will Rogers very well - as you know he made a series of short films at the Roach Studio during our time there,a wonderful person.! No,do'nt see many of the old-timers - many of them have passed on of course,Charles Middleton you mention died several years ago - I know Bert Wheeler very well friends for many years,we still correspond occasionally.

I only spent one week each time I played in Winnipeg - Yes I used to do quite a lot of Marlin fishing,had a nice boat in those days,specially equipped for 'Big Game' fishing - caught many Marlin,my largest was 258lbs - I was a member of the famous Tuna Club at Avalon,Santa Catalina Island - wish I were able to take a cruise once in a while - do'nt have my boat anymore & too my health situation is'nt too good. I was born in Ulverston,Lancashire, England, June I6th.I890.Ulverston is near the famous Lake Windermere,you may have hear of it. The weather here is getting quite hot again - had lots of rain,fog & cold recently,even some snow in many sections, so unusual for us out here.

Am enclosing a snapshot taken last summer - have none in Color. Thanks for snapshot of flood scene (I950) must have been quite a shower.! Bye Bill.

Again,all the best.

As ever:

Stan Laurel.

STAN LAUREL.

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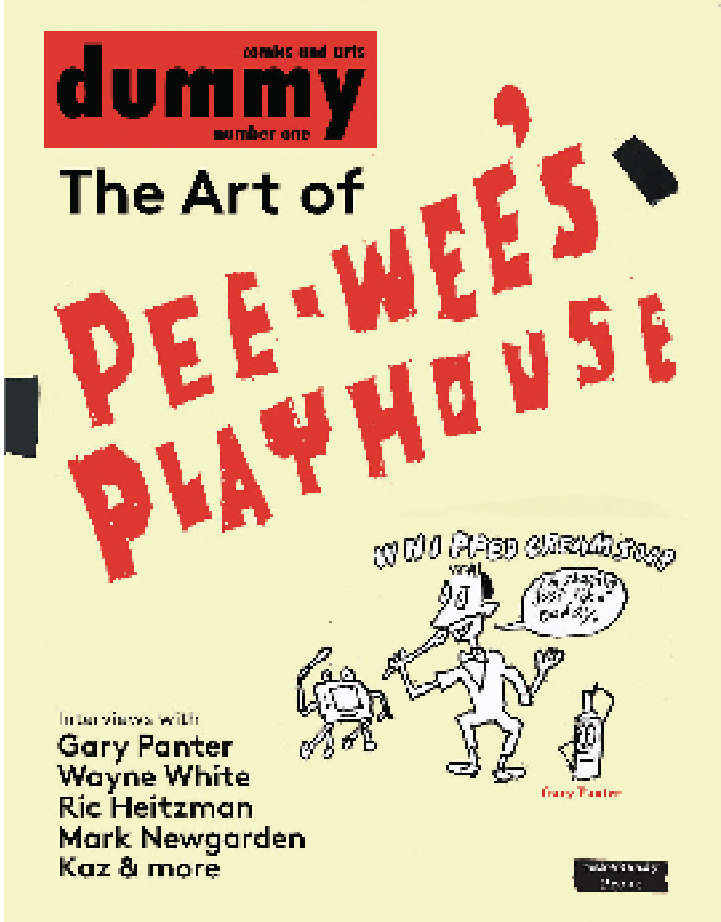
- Steven Heller, The Daily Heller

"Dummy is like a giant steak at Peter Luger's...man, oh, man, what an accomplishment!"
- Jim Woodring, cartoonist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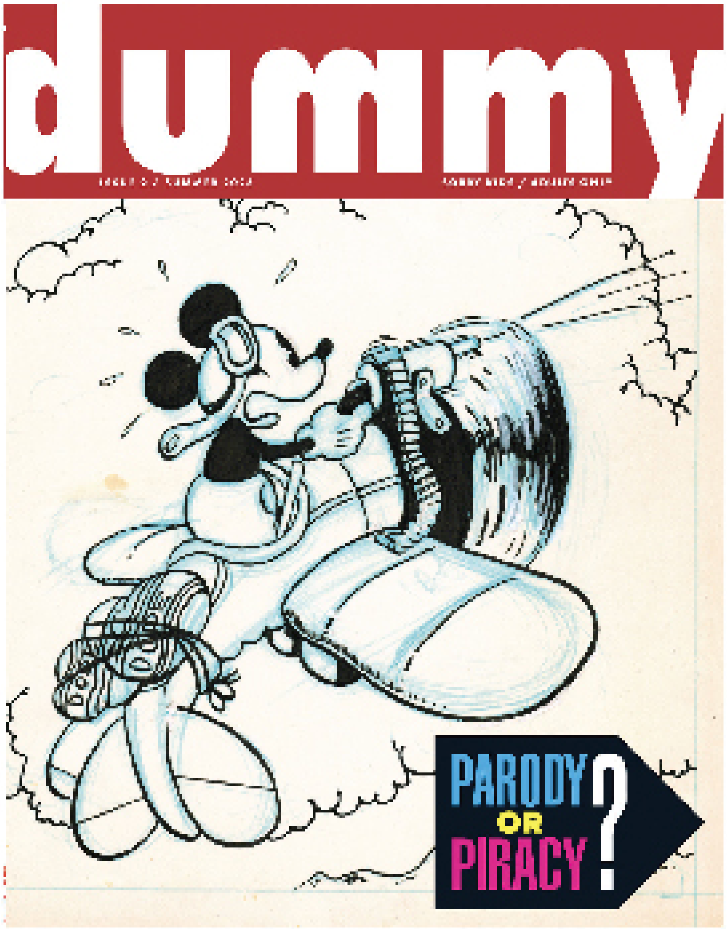
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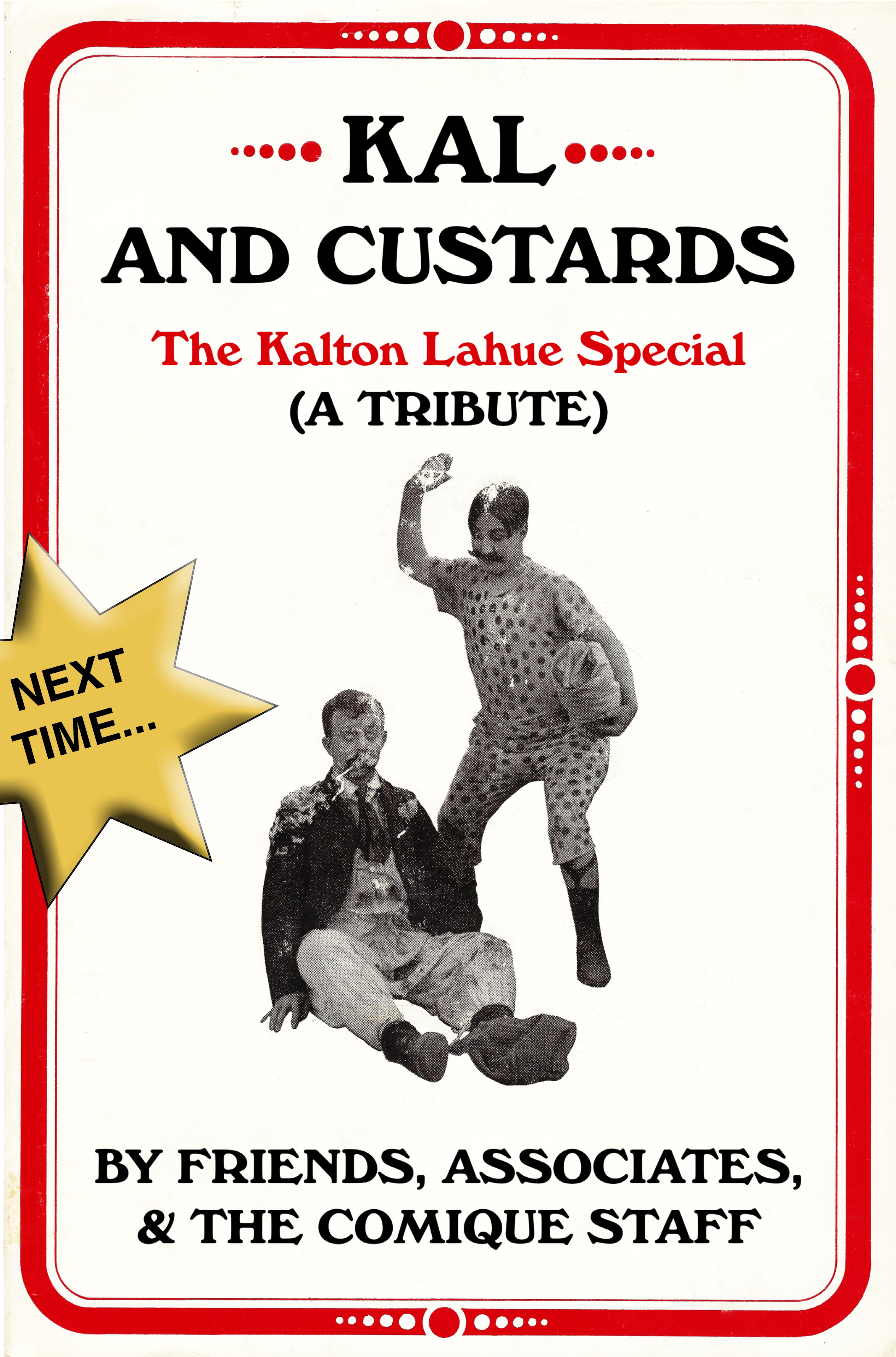

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